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THE CABIN

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THOMAS NELSON & SONS

CALIFORNIA

The Cabin.

THE CABIN

BY

STEWART EDWARD WHITE

ILLUSTRATED

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

THOMAS NELSON & SONS
LONDON, EDINBURGH, LEEDS, DUBLIN
NEW YORK, PARIS, AND LEIPSIC

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DEDICATED
TO OUR FRIENDS OF
PEACE CABIN

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Withal the sky is intense blue; the air warm to the skin, but cool to the nostril; all the world is vibrant as a ringing crystal with the joy and life of the Morning of the Year.

On such a time Billy, old California John, and I rode through the forest. Our way led along a plateau near the summit of a great mountain. We were on a gently rolling level of several miles in width, rising gradually ahead of us. To our left we could have ridden to where the mountain fell away three thousand feet precipitously. To our right, we could equally have climbed, had we so wished, several hundred feet more to the top of the range, whence we could have seen abroad over an area equal to many kingdoms of the earth. Neither of these facts, however, had any evidences to offer us. The great sugar pines and firs shut us in; the streams sang across our path. Occasionally we pushed through a leafy thicket that bathed us mysteriously in its fresh green; occasionally we mounted a little hill up which the tall trees marched ahead of us orderly. The smooth green bear-clover spread its mantle over the slopes. Thickets of snowbrush sprawled in the sunlit openings. The horses plodded along the dim trail, handling each foot separately after the wise fashion of the mountain animal. Pepper, the Airedale, and Tuxana, the bull terrier, patted behind.

All at once Pepper and Tuxana scurried madly off at a tangent through the brush. After a moment we heard the excited and outraged chattering of a squirrel.

"He just made it, and now he's getting rid of his scare by scolding about it," said California John. "He's telling them what he'd do if he was only as big as they are. Curious what a difference size makes. Imagine an island where all the big animals would be little, and all the little animals big! I bet the lion would hunt his hole as quick as any of the bunch!"

"And I suppose the mouse would be the terror of the place," suggested Billy.

"No, ma'am," replied the Ranger. "A

skunk four foot high would be the boss of creation."

The woods road wound here and there, then straightened. A long, gentle slope led us slowly up. Beyond the ridge we could make out, not more trees, but a wide opening whose nature was as yet concealed.

"That's it," said the Ranger.

In a moment we had surmounted the shoulder of the slope.

Before us stretched a long, fair meadow, green as new fir tips, enamelled with flowers. It fell away from us with a dignified spaciousness, to come to rest in a group of aspens. Behind them reared huge sugar pines, and all about stood others, solemn and aloof, drawing back in courtesy to give room for this gem of a meadow with its azalea fringe, its trickle of flowing water, its flowers, its floods of sunshine.

California John reined in his horse and threw his leg over the pommel of his saddle.

"Told you it was purty nice," said he.

Billy scrambled off her horse.

"Pretty nice!" she sniffed reproachfully.

We followed her example and set out to explore. Directly at the head of the long vista had been built a sort of elevated seat or throne. It was a luxurious affair, ingeniously constructed of barrel staves curved to fit the back. A group of young trees shaded it: a cool breeze sucked up the opening of the meadow.

"What a delightful throne!" cried Billy, "and how well it is placed! Who do you suppose built it? It must have been somebody nice to have cared for this."

"No, ma'am," the Ranger replied stolidly. "It was some old sheepman. He probably didn't care a cuss for the view, but he could watch his sheep better from here."

To the left of the throne, and slightly in the hollow, lurked an old cabin. It proved to be a commodious affair built of twelve-inch boards and shakes. Its rooms were thick with the forest litter; its foundation timbers were rotted and awry; its roof was full of holes; its floor sagged alarmingly.

California John tapped its walls.

"Still good as ever," said he. "The fellow who built it moved out twenty-five years back. But he built her to stay. The roof leaks, but the rafters ain't sagged an inch. The foundation and the floor are about give out, but the frame is all right. There's good stuff in her yet."

"Why did he move out?" asked Billy.

"Company bought his claim for timber. See; his shed's full of split wood, just as he left it ready for the winter. It soon gets to be winter here. I've seen ten foot of snow on the level."

He pointed out to us the remains of an old picket fence.

"That was his old truck garden. You'd never think that had been ploughed and planted."

He lifted one of the pickets and inspected it thoughtfully.

"Split pickets set two inches apart," said he; "think of the work! One man felled the trees and split them out one by one.

And he fenced all this meadow too. You can see the remains of that fence down by the lower corner. Splitting rails is hard work. And that's his spring-house. It's stood all these years. Come on, try her. Coldest, finest water in these mountains."

We dipped our rubber cups and poured a silent libation to the vanished builder.

"Seems a kind of waste, somehow," said the Ranger, waving his hand abroad. "You have to keep things up or they go. In another ten years there won't be anything left but his stumps where he cut the cedar. And they're rotting." He removed his old hat and rubbed his head. "He was a hard worker. And now all his works——"

"'*Are one with Nineveh and Tyre,*'" I quoted.

He caught my allusion instantly.

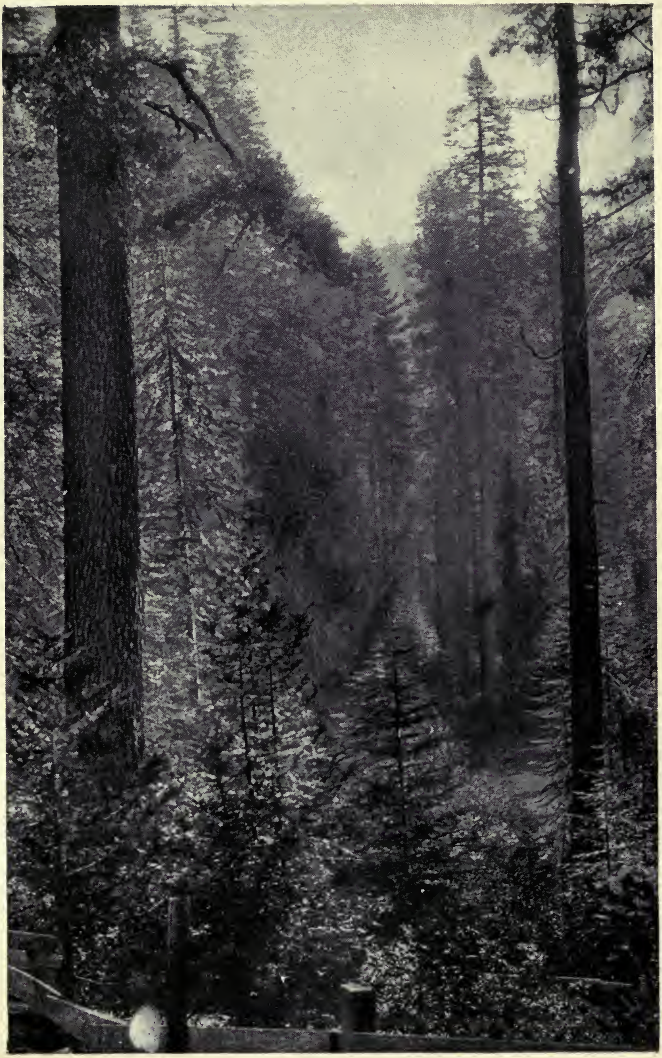
"That's so," said he. "He is in purty good company."

We walked on down the slope. Unexpectedly the vistaed meadow spread out to right and left in bays and estuaries reaching boldly into the forest. It proved to be much broader than it had seemed. Springs trickled here and there from the hillside. The aspens clapped their innumerable hands in an unending applause. At the lowermost end of the meadow a stream threaded dense willow and alder thickets. We could hear it quietly gurgling and chuckling to itself somewhere in the shadow, but we could not penetrate to it.

"Runs into the Creek twenty rod down," explained California John.

We therefore walked those twenty rods. The Creek dashed and sang and gloried over the rocks, foaming and leaping from pool to riffle and from riffle to pool. The other bank rose steeply up and up, and still up. We could not see the sky-line of it, for it, too, was clad in a beautiful and mysterious forest.

CALIFORNIA



The vista of the meadow and the new young Spring.

II

SHORT

In the far mountains, seventy miles from a railroad and a mile up in the air, you have to do with what you can get. At home it is easy to order a thing, and then to wait briefly until that thing is accomplished. Here there is a wide gap between the conception and the production.

So after we had decided that the meadow must be ours, we ran against unexpected difficulty. The old pioneer's cabin would not do, but the material of it would. We decided to build more accurately at the head of the long vista. But to tear down one house and build another needs more than one pair of hands.

"We must hire a man to help us," said Billy comfortably.

Now that looks simple. But in the mountains are very few men, living far apart, and each busy at his own affairs. One would rather work for himself than for another, and any one with an axe, a horse, or a pick and shovel could always work for himself. But also the mountain people are kindly and well-disposed to help. From mouth to mouth the message went, until at last I learned that on a specified morning a man open to employment would meet me at such an hour on a certain trail.

I was there early, in anticipation of a wait. He was earlier, sitting at ease on his horse. We each gravely named the other by way of salutation, introduction, and identification, and turned our animals' heads toward the Meadow.

The predominant notes of the man as you looked at him first were a great square seal-brown beard growing to the cheek-bones, and brown eyes wide apart, looking from beneath a square-chiselled brow. So massive and square-cut was this effect that I could imagine it quite possible to talk with him an hour, and then to go away carrying an impression of a big strong-framed man. As a matter of fact, Short weighed just one hundred and thirty pounds, and suffered from rheumatism. Nevertheless, the personality of the man was expressed rather by his Jove-like head than by his slight pain-racked body. He had a slow, calculating, stay-fast way of going at a heavy job apparently beyond his strength, that somehow carried it to accomplishment.

I explained to him what I wanted, and he listened to me clear through, without interruption or comment. Then he looked the old cabin over very thoroughly from top to bottom, and took a few measurements. In eight words he pointed out the folly of our proposed location; and in eight more gave conclusively good reasons for another, thirty feet farther up the hill.

"All we'll need is shakes[1] for a new roof, and to clear up a little, and my tools. We'll need a team for about two days."

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[1] Shakes, *i.e.* hand-riven shingles.

"Where'll you get it?" I asked.

"Do'no. But I'll get it."

He did. At the end of three days he appeared perched atop his tool-chest, a keg of nails, a bed-roll, and some groceries. We could hear them banging through the woods almost as soon as they topped the ridge. About every hundred feet the driver would quite cheerfully clamber down, unhitch one or two spans of mules as the case might be, and haul to one side a greater or lesser obstruction to progress. Sometimes he had to chop a way through. Once or twice he hitched a span to the rear of the wagon in order to drag it back for a better start. The rate of speed was not many miles an hour, but the caravan left behind it a cleared way where passage there had been none before.

That driver was the most cheerful, energetic individual ever planted in a dusty way of life. His form was long, his eye twinkling, his voice drawling, his movements deliberate but powerful, and his face rough-hewn after the Lincoln manner. Indeed, his clean-shaven lips had a chronic humorous quirk to them such as one might imagine illuminating the country circuit-lawyer at the recollection of a good story. None of this driver's moments seemed dedicated to ease. He hauled stone for the chimney, he hauled timbers for the foundation, he generously hauled "dead and downs" out of the way. And when he couldn't find anything more to haul, he put up elaborate feed-troughs for his animals, and dug fresh spring-holes, and generally invented things to do.

In the meantime Short had made him a camp. I went over to see him, and found him examining one by one his tools. Over these he expanded. Each had its particular virtue, its individual story. He had homely reasons for the selection of each variety, and he delighted to give them.

These days of machinery have rather tended to render obsolescent old-fashioned carpentry. So many things can be done more cheaply at the mill or the shops; so many devices are purchasable at such low prices, that the man who can fashion his appliances for himself is becoming scarce. Short knew his trade, and the theories of it, and the mathematics of its measurements and angles. He delighted in its exactitudes. He insisted on its thoroughnesses. He approached every job without haste, in due deliberation of thought, with all completeness of preliminary preparation. From the raw unplaned material he fashioned all things, even to panelled doors which the casual visitor will not believe did not come from the shops. At first I thought him slow. Then I changed my mind. Nothing Short called finished had ever to be done over. The Cabin has weathered six years of Sierra snows; it has been buried actually to the ridge pole. Not one line is off the true; the windows slide, the doors open freely, the floor has not warped or buckled.

He showed me a short heavy clawed instrument like a dwarfed bent crowbar with a forked tail.

"That's my own invention," said he. "It'll pull off those boards without splitting one of them—I don't care how many nails the old fellow used."

A moment later a sharp *rip* startled the mules. The first board of our lumber-pile-to-be was laid on one side.

III

THE FIREPLACE

Of course we had to have a fireplace—that went without saying—and it must be of stone. As the granite everywhere outcropped, that seemed to be a simple matter, but we speedily changed our minds. Any granite would not do. Short pronounced that near the Meadow of a most inferior quality. It looked all right, but he assured us that under the test of heat it would spalt, split, flake, and do other reprehensible things. So we extended our investigations. First and last, afoot and horseback, we covered considerable country before we found the proper sort of outcrop. It looked the same as any other to me; but Short was entranced. The frost had cloven it in blocks of various dimensions ready for our handling. One piece was of the exact size and shape for a hearthstone. We spent a good deal of labour to get that slab intact into place. We succeeded; but, as I remember it, the thing weighed nearly two tons!

From the ledge all this rock had to be dragged to the cabin site. We let the horses do the hauling, by means of a rough "stone boat"; but the heavy lifting and rolling was ours.

Having acquired a formless pile of granite, it next became necessary to gather our mortar for cementing the stones together. Short pronounced a mixture of clay and salt the proper thing.

Now, clay on a Sierra mountain is one of the scarcest commodities afforded by an otherwise beneficent nature. We found our little bank of it some four miles distant and quarterway down the steep mountain-side. From that point we packed it in sacks—one slung either side the pack-horse, and one atop—eight miles—and the pick-and-shovel labour of digging it out! As for the salt, that came in from the "outside."

Having thus, by dint of patient labour, gathered the raw materials, we were ready to begin. I always like to speak of the chimney "Short and I built." As a matter of cold sober truth, I did not have much to do with it. To be sure I was mightily busy. I carried pails of water, two at a time, from the spring, and I shovelled over that mixture of salt, clay, and water until my arms ached; and lifted chunks of granite until my back cracked; and I panted and heaved and tugged at scaffolds and things from early morn till dewy eve. But it was Short who laid the stone. Short's eye gauged craftily the slants and angles and openings. Short's ingenuity constructed the slides and levers by which we elevated the heavier stones to the greater heights. And Short's was the triumph when that chimney "drew" perfectly.

But before we reached that happy result we discovered two things; that we would need a lot more granite, and that the increasing difficulty of hoisting without appliances heavy rocks to an increasing height was going to extend the job somewhere into the next century.

"I know of an old sawmill stovepipe," quoth Short. "It's down the mountain. We could take it apart and bring it up here, I reckon."

His reckoning was correct. We acquired that pipe, and in due time finished out our chimney with it. It looks a little queer, until you get used to it; but it draws like a furnace. We cherish the illusion that some day we will face it up with more stone. That is one of the delights of living in the wilderness; there are so many things that some day you can do!

But though Short's is the chimney, the mantel and "fixin's" are mine. I did them while he was at the doors. The mantel is a spacious affair. Twin columns of young sugar-pine ten inches through, and with the bark on, support a shelf of the same material. The shelf, however, is a log split in half and notched to fit accurately over the pointed tops of the columns. It is to the shelf surface I would call your attention. The smoothing was done entirely with an axe;—a labour of nicety most exhilarating when your strokes fall surely, and most disgusting when a blow awry spoils an hour's work.

The fittings of the fireplace, too, are worth notice. When we built the chimney, we embedded in it a support for a crane. This was made of a piece of wagon tire. The crane was fashioned from the same material. From it depend old-fashioned pot-hooks and hangers, which are merely miscellaneous iron rods in disguise. Three utensils inhabit the fireplace: a heavy squat iron kettle, so ludicrously Dutch in build that we call it "Gretchen"; and two iron pots. Every evening, even in summer, is cool enough for a fire. We do a great deal of cooking on that crane. It is exceedingly pleasant to hear Gretchen sing while the flames leap up the cavern of the chimney.

For the chimney is a cavern. It is wide and high and deep. Short built it to take comfortably a three-foot log. Wood is everywhere for the pleasant labour of chopping it.

The "fire-irons," with one exception, are all home-made. Tongs are of tough oak steamed and bent double. The kettle-lifter is an alder crook, appropriately cut and peeled. The poker is a piece of wild cherry, the handsome bark left on. The bellows is a small rubber tube with a few inches of flattened brass pipe inserted at one end; you blow into the other. The "stand" is a fork of beautiful red manzañita, the ends of which are tacked either side one of the mantelpiece columns. But the fire shovel is the pride of the lot.

That fire shovel is an example of the preciousness of treasure trove in the wilderness. A nail back of Shuteye is a marvellous thing. A tin can, whole and in good repair, becomes an invaluable coffee-pot. An abandoned dishpan is appropriated with a delight inconceivable. A chance piece of string rejoices the heart; and an old piece of paper is better than fine gold.

So impressed is this truth on those who have travelled much away from civilisation, that often a man becomes a sort of magpie in the collection of attractive things. Billy is very strong on bottles. She never can bear to pass one on the trail, but will dismount and tuck her find in her saddle-bag, and at camp wash it carefully. Flat whiskey-flasks fill her with a particular and especial delight. We never, that I remember, used bottles for any purpose except occasionally to shoot at; but to Billy they looked valuable.

This spirit was responsible for our fire shovel. We discovered it, rusted, without a handle, bent and disreputable, in a heap of burned débris. It was one of those sheet-iron affairs with a fluted edge, that is ordinarily varnished black and in company with a coal scuttle. Why anybody brought it into the mountains in the first place would be difficult guessing. Anyhow, there it was. It "looked valuable," so we took it along. Now at last its being was justified. We knocked off the rust, straightened it out, fitted to it a beautiful white dogwood handle, and installed it in a position of honour. Now we point with pride to the fact that we are the only people in these mountains possessing a real fire shovel.

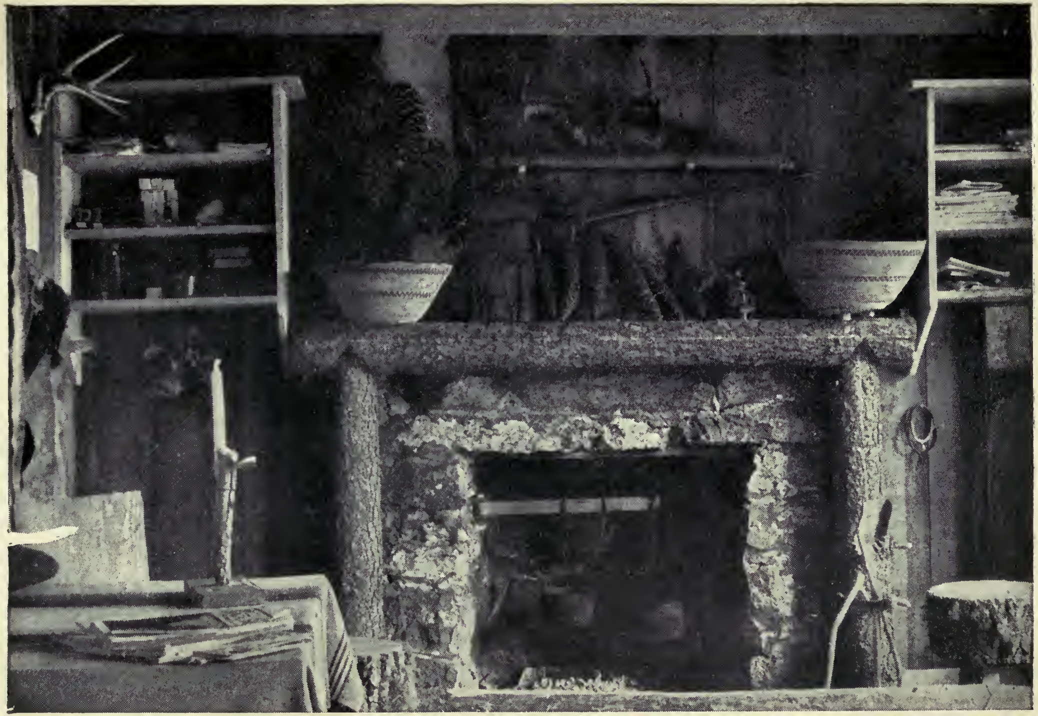
IV

THE TREES

UNTIL the Cabin was built, we camped near the foot of the meadow. After it was completed, we made a bedstead among the azaleas. The bedroom we saved for the time it should rain. It almost never rained. So in that chamber were tools and clothes and supplies —and a bedstead, just to prove its title.

If one sleeps out-of-doors, he lives in company with the trees and the stars, and sees the birds at their morning business.

A few statistics must be permitted me, for only thus can I convey to you an approximate idea of our trees. A California forest counts as saplings the full-grown pines of our Northern woods. Next the Cabin verandah is a sugar pine twenty-seven feet in circumference above the swell. A few rods down



But though Short's is the chimney, the mantle and "fixin's" are mine.

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the Meadow stands another, seven feet in diameter and two hundred and forty feet tall. At the end of the vista is the biggest of all, a giant of two hundred and eighty feet. These figures will be better understood when I call to your attention the fact that our Capitol dome at Washington is about the same in height. Imagine one of these noble trees in Capitol Square.

Nor am I offering you exceptions; only vigorous mature trees. Within my restricted view from the one window near which I am writing I can count twenty-seven nearly as big. The hills and slopes and valleys are cathedral-like with their straight columns, buttressed and massive, upholding the temple of the Out-of-doors. Some of their trunks are grey and venerable; but some, especially in the light of late afternoon, are warm with red and umber. In contrast to the green cool shadows they appear to glow with an incandescence of their own.

The sugar pine's limbs are wide and spreading, with a sturdy outward up-holding vigour.

From their tips depend the long cones, daintily, like the relaxed fingers of a bestowing hand at the end of a robed arm. So always the sugar pines seemed to me the Great Ones of the forest, calm and beneficent, with arms stretched out in benediction of the lesser peoples.

To one who has never seen them, the cones are wonderful. Such cones were never imagined in advance of their discovery. It means little to say that they are over a foot and a half in length. You must pick one up, and compare it mentally with your recollections of what pine cones were to your childhood. You will select a dozen of the first you see, discard some for others, larger; in turn exchange them, until at last, bewildered, you abandon them all in a maze of wonder. Scattered under the trees they look like the neglected toys of the Giant children who alone are fitted to play in this enchanted forest of vastness. And suddenly you feel very small and insignificant.

Nor is the fancy entirely dissolved when you see them in place on the trees. They do not grow close to the limbs or the sturdier branches after the manner of the other conifers; but at the slenderest tips. There they depend gracefully, their weight bending down the tips in a long curve, swaying slowly to and fro in every breeze, as though hung there like so many presents for those who mind their manners.

That part of it, however, is a delusion. The pine squirrel and the Douglas generally get the cones, and these saucy, busy little animals do not mind their manners at all. Quite to the contrary. They clamber aloft, and cut loose the green cones, and let them fall, reckless of whether you are passing. Then they scamper down and patiently eat away to the heart in search of the nuts, leaving at the last a wonderful and delicate winding-stairway of a core.

That is beautiful; but more beautiful still is to make of the fallen cones a fire after darkness has thickened. The blaze is hot and grateful; but after it dies there remain ghosts of cones, each perfect in every detail, glowing incandescent, a last ethereal appearance before they fall silently to the earth from which, through many complicated natural processes, they have sprung. That little pile of white ashes represents all the solids they owe the soil. The rest of their structure they drew from the air about them; and in the brief glory of their last moments to the air they render back again its due.

But though the sugar pines are the most spiritual, the firs, scarcely inferior in size, are the most mysterious. From their pointed tops, down the candle-flame-shaped body of their frond to the rough wrinkled bark of them they possess a thousand planes to catch the lights and shades. From golden-green moulded surfaces, like the conventionalised foliage of the metal-worker, to the dark velvet soft shadows of unplumbed depth the eye passes. At times of the year each fan branch is delicately outlined in light green by the new tips. The firs are always alive with birds flashing into half-visibility, and flirting back out of sight again; appearing silently for a moment's inspection, and melting into the shadow as though dissolved; balancing on the tips or creeping deviously over the rough and wrinkled bark. And to complete the effect, the firs deck themselves with a close-growing bright yellow-green moss, that even on the darkest day lightens the forest as by imprisoned sunshine. It is impossible to exaggerate either the brilliant sun-effect of this moss or the artistic skill of its distribution. It does not grow in festoons, but close to the bark like a fur an inch or so in depth. Sometimes it occurs in rings around the trunk, like the stripes on old-fashioned stockings. And it can take a dead twig or limb, and so completely cover it as to glorify it.

Here and there also rise the buttressed, fluted red columns of the fragrant incense-cedar. Exceedingly handsome is this tree, curious with its fibrous bark, grand in the sturdy strength of its thickness and the blunt taper of its boles. But especially it is estimable for the spicy odour of it, and for its fragrance as it burns, for the beautiful colour of its wood, and the ease of its splitting into posts and rails. A few of its broad fans in the bed bring dreams of green forests.

These are the strong of the woodland, the mature vigorous trees in the prime of life. But there are also the old men and the youngsters. Were it not for them the forest would be almost too austere for the comfort of human residence.

I like these old men, still straight and erect before falling at last to Mother Earth. There are three of them near the entrance to our domain, just before you top the ridge for your glimpse over to the meadow-opening. The bark has all long since fallen away, and the smooth bare trunks of them have weathered to the grey of old shingles. In the shadow and colour of the forest they shine forth like phantoms of trees. By moonlight they are particularly ghostly.

An artist I know used occasionally to paint the high mountains. His colour and light were good, and his technique not to be questioned, for he is a man of the finest genius. Yet something lacked. After long puzzling, the solution stared out at me from the canvas: his trees were all green and vigorous. There were no hoary old losers of the struggle against time; no "dead and downs"; no accent to his forest. For these stubs, and stripped trunks, and brown dying ancients are part of the character of the woods. With them removed you have a park, not a forest.

But if these supplement the mature trees by the glory of their nakedness, the younger growths afford the intimacies without which the wilderness would be inhuman and unlivable. The thickets of fir and pine are full of tepid odours, grateful warmths, humming insects, chirpy, familiar little birds. They shut in tiny chambers of reverie from the austerity of the great forest. Around them cluster the fragrant azaleas, the burred chinquapins, the thorny snowbrush, the manzañita—all the smaller affairs. They live below the august giants as we live below the stars, attending to their own minute affairs, engrossed in their private activities. They are in the thick of it. Life is competitive, earnest, struggling. From the moment they push their way above the soil, still wearing helmetwise the shell of the nut that produced them, they have earnestly to attend to the business of existence. At first their enemies are the sheep, the dryness, the hoofs of cattle, the cold shadow. Later they must fight each other. Of a dense thicket but one, or two at most, can mature. A hundred saplings are elbowing each other aside, climbing rapidly up toward the light and air, smothering each other, reaching jealously out for the moisture and sustenance which shall help them in the struggle. Those that are overtopped turn sickly in the shade of their stronger brothers, finally die, fall, rot away, and are fed upon by the triumphant victors.

It is for this reason, perhaps, that the great trees possess their aloof air of supernal calm. The struggle and heat of combat are over for them. They have fought their way clear to a foothold, to the calm appropriation by right of what they need. From the forest they have nothing to fear. Their aloofness is the aloofness that comes from experience, from the philosophy of duty done, from the almost Buddhistic contemplation of primal sources.

The oftener one comes back to the forest, the more deeply is one impressed by the fact that these calm green people have entered fully into the over-philosophy we attain to only in snatches.

Each summer, when I return to the Cabin, and look about at the well-remembered aspects of our woodland, the intervening eight months shrink painfully as the measure of life. It is but yesterday that we packed our belongings, locked the cabin door, and trailed down the mountain to civilisation. Yet I am eight months older, have remaining to me just that much less of life. And the realisation comes to me that the succession of summers will be like the succession of days here—where one sees the Dawn Tree gilding with the sunrise, and, behold! it is night and the stars are out! Time as a dimension does not exist; its passage cannot be realised; its duration cannot be savoured. And the residuum of the days is so small. Pleasures enjoyed dissolve away. Only remain the things accomplished, and they are few. In the presence of the Trees we look upon the poor little handful of accomplishment our eight months have left us, and we are ashamed.

Little by little the commonplace, rich philosophies come back to us — the value of small things; the stability of the object created, even though it be but a new broom handle; the importance of taking your advantage from routine work, since there is so much of it to be done; the desirability of fixing your enjoyment on means rather than ends, for means occupy the greater hours, and ends are but moments. These things from one point of view are tiresome; from another they, like all the simple philosophies of life, are vases whose beauties show only where they are filled with experience and dear-bought wisdom. In the hurry and confusion of life the vases are emptied.

V

ON THE ACQUISITION OF TREASURE

When the frame and roof of the Cabin were completed, Short left us with the empty shell.

"I reckon you can get along all right now," said he simply.

By fortune we came to the Cabin from the Trail and not from the towns. So we began life, quite contentedly, on the simplest terms. All our household goods, our personal effects and our food supplies we had been used to packing on a single mule. When that mule was unloaded, we were established and at home.

Therefore we did not feel the instant necessity of the numberless conveniences which, little by little, as mood and leisure served, we have constructed for ourselves. We were then camping; and camping as we do it is such an easy matter! When the Cabin was done, we cut ourselves a fresh supply of fir and cedar boughs, hung up our camp kit, arranged our food bags, and settled down quite happily. The only immediate innovation was a sheet-iron stove, which rode in, ludicrously aslant, on Flapjack's back.

Of course the meadow had to be fenced. Our horses, long accustomed to the Trail, would graze contentedly for some time; but, sooner or later, their bellies full and their minds empty, the desire for travel would seize upon them. By luck the vanished builder on the meadow had left behind him some split cedar posts. We lashed these either side a pack animal, and distributed them. Then we dug holes, painfully, one at a time, with more or less luck in getting down to a proper depth through the rocky soil. After that we strung the barbed wire. It had come in, two rolls of it, well wrapped in sacking to avoid gashing the animal that bore it. When we removed the sacking, it showed all its teeth and gave its evil propensities full swing.

I hate barbed wire. From the time you first string it out, when you stretch it, nail it, mend it, it is full of cussedness. No matter how gingerly you handle it, it will switch and jerk through your hands, it will snatch at your flesh, it will snap viciously at you like a scorpion. And when it is up, it lies in wait like a trap. Probably more good horses have been blemished and ruined by barbed wire than by any other single agency.

But it turns cattle and it is quickly strung. The latter point made it obligatory in our case. The only alternative would have been a rail fence; and the rails were still growing in the trees.

After the fence was up, and the gates and corral built, there remained apparently nothing more to do but to enjoy life in pleasant idleness.

As a matter of fact, we have been doing things ever since. As fast as one thing is completed, another suggests itself. And a little at a time accomplishes a great deal in the long run. In the four summers we have spent here we have, without a dollar of "hired help," written a very respectable list of accomplishment. Two bedsteads, a bureau, eight chairs, three tables, shelves and cupboards, a meat safe, a bath-house, a barn with two stalls, a spring boxed, a "cold storage," a drain, a dog kennel, a flagpole, saddle racks, nine hundred cedar rails split and in place, road improvements, the meadow ditched, and one by one a slow accumulation of treasures from the distant world outside—these have kept us busy and contented.

Starting with nothing, each new acquisition is indeed a treasure. A thing is valuable in direct proportion to the amount of time you have spent on it. At home you hire a carpenter to build you a stall, and you appreciate it as a convenience. Here you fell your fir, hew it square, carry it to place on your shoulders, nail it home with nails packed eighty miles. The days are full, and the labour exhausting, so you are at it only two or three hours a day. When the stall is done, you celebrate that fact, and ever after you cast a friendly and appreciative glance at all stalls.

That is the principle applicable to all things. It is a truism that the loss of a catboat bought from the clerk's salary is more of a catastrophe than the wreck of the yacht purchased casually by the millionaire. The catboat represents four months; the yacht perhaps ten minutes, gauging by the incomes of the two men. Time is value.

This will explain the pride Billy takes in her table service. It is only white enamel ironware edged with blue, but it succeeded tin plates and kettles on the table. And let this be noted: when you have filed an axe for some years, you can hardly tear yourself away from a brand-new ball-bearing grindstone, carried in from the railroad terminus by horses.

Let the principle sink in. Then, with due respect approach these facts which I will detail

Our horses, long accustomed to the Trail.

to you. And remember that this catalogne of possessions was not written all at once; but item by item, by chance, good fortune, careful planning, by long, hot, dusty journeys, by the courtesy of friends coming our way. Each has had its day of especial and particular cherishing, each has been envied and admired by those who had it not, each has been an inspiration to further acquisition.

Our kitchen has a genuine double boiler—you who have had jealously to watch lest the mush burned, please take notice. It has a cake lifter, a large dishpan, and a brace of saucepans. There is an iron wash-tub and a scrubbing board. We have a glass kerosene lamp and two extra chimneys. A looking-glass hangs uncracked in a good light. And if you had improvised for two years with an axe, a hatchet, and a cross-cut saw all items of carpentry and woodwork, you would appreciate the fact that we have a sledge and wedges for splitting, a crowbar, an auger, blasting powder and fuse, a rip-saw, a square, a plane, chisels, wood-rasps, hoe, rake. With these one can accomplish wonders.

And each was brought in and exhibited and tried triumphantly as though it had been a Christmas present.

VI

ON PIONEERING

In the gradual evolution of our home on the meadow we have come very close to genuine pioneering. It is easy to play at such things: a few tents by a lake—with the farmer's permission—looks very like camping, and is often good enough fun. We have many illustrious examples of the men who have gone out into the woods to cut down their weekly tree. Most of us like to relieve our guides of a great deal of the cooking, the chopping, the packing, the paddling. This arises from a healthy desire to stretch our muscles, take exercise, play at doing those things which are a guide's everyday business. In so doing we may work very hard; that is not the point.

But whatever we do, in such circumstances, is the manifestation of a spirit of play: and the proof of it is that at any moment we can deliver back these activities into professional hands. And even when, as often in more civilised communities, some of us elect to put up our own workshop, or build our furniture, or even construct our house, it is a matter of deliberate choice. The carpenter is always there for the hiring.

But in pioneer conditions a man constructs because in no other way can he acquire those things of which he stands in desire or in need. He can hire no help; he has access to no shops. As for tables, chairs, fences, they are there in the standing timber waiting to be bodied forth by the crude tools at his command. The chimney is scattered away among the rock outcrops; the road, hidden among obstacles, is waiting to be defined and made passable; the few comforts he will grow to need are at the other end of the long trail. If this man is naturally a savage, he dwells beneath crude shelters under the trees. A week after he is gone, little remains to indicate where he has abided. But if he possesses in his soul the yeast of civilisation, then most surely, little by little, as well as he may, he will construct and accumulate the customary appurtenances of that state. It is a necessity of his nature. In his surroundings he expresses man's instinctive desire for a habitation and certain orderly well-made things. If he likes the work, so much the better; but he may detest it. That seems to make no difference.

So in our summer home we find ourselves very much in the position of those early backwoodsmen.

If we want a thing, we have to make it or go and get it. Nobody can be had to do it for us or carry it to us. When we split rails or chop wood or dig ditches, it is not by way of posing for the strenuous life, but because we need those things. It would never occur to us to undertake such affairs at home. We are in a way a self-contained community. We cook, do our laundry, perform our daily tasks, because if we did not things would run down. It happens that we like all this, which is lucky.

Even if such tasks were more or less of a grind, I think we should still come to the Cabin. In that event we should consider them, like the discomforts of the wilderness, only a just price to pay.

Of course at any time we can saddle up and in ten days be back where flourishes the starched collar. That choice is always open to us. A similar choice was open to any wilderness dweller. There has always been a highly intensive civilisation to which to return. The pioneer need not have left the towns. He did so because he disliked the life, or from restlessness, or a spirit of adventure, or in search of opportunity. The altruistic idea of opening up a new country was not one of his considerations; or it was of secondary importance.

In this manner, without a conscious intention of so doing, we have to a certain extent succeeded in getting to the inside of a pioneer existence. Objectively it has always seemed to many people constricted, narrow, hard, without inspiration, without material of which to construct a vantage point for the spiritual insight. Yet when approached by the regular road, this is soon proved untrue.

It is astonishing to discover the physical possibilities of even the ordinary things we take for granted. We are apt to look upon a mechanic as plying a *mechanical* trade; that is to say, one whose routine makes very little call on his intelligence. It needs but one essay at the simplest of his jobs to discover the woeful error. Even aided by good instruction, we find our wits taxed to the utmost in figuring out reasons, expedients, and necessities of method; and properties, limitations, and possibilities of materials. To correlate a half-dozen of the simplest operations so accurately as to produce a finished workmanlike result means a lot of thinking and sums up considerable concrete knowledge gained. And it is astonishing how interesting that knowledge is, and how important it turns out to be in application to a hundred different things.

A rail fence is a common enough affair.

The theory is simple: You fell a tree; cut it into proper lengths; split those lengths into rails by means of iron wedges; carry them to place; and arrange them in a zigzag.

What happens? In the first place, you must know how to use an axe. There are few implements more satisfactory to handle well; and few more chancy, awkward, and, yes, dangerous to a greenhorn. A blow at a wrong angle will glance and twist the helve from your hand to injure an innocent bystander or gash your leg deep. This is a very common accident. Unless the blade hits always in the same place you will only "chew into the wood," instead of cutting clean chips. A smooth surface to your kerf means that, at full strength, you can hit to within an eighth of an inch of where you want to, and with a heavier implement than a golf stick. You must further know how best to deliver your strength, when to increase the speed of your stroke, how to use your shoulders. Otherwise the expenditure of energy is excessive, and you soon tire to exhaustion. Furthermore, your axe must be kept razor-sharp—the cheerfully nicked, rounded edge of the old woodpile weapon won't do at this work. The relations of steel to stone and file must be mastered. If you think rubbing one against the other is about all that is required, you have much earnest cogitation still to come.

Perhaps you may find some woodsman miraculously endowed with powers of explanation who will tell you some of these things. If so, the information will be contained in hints, illuminating only through your own observation. But more likely you will have to try, and then figure a bit, and watch somebody, and figure a bit more, and then try it again, until finally by dint of both thought and practice you will arrive at skill.

The axe plays but a part in the felling of your tree. You must with it cut a "notch" on the side toward which you wish it to fall. A certain knowledge of probable weights of limbs and slant of trunks as affecting centres of gravity is here necessary. Then from the other side you manipulate the cross-cut saw.

It looks very simple as you watch a woodsman at work. He draws the saw back and forth horizontally until he can insert a wedge in the crack. Then he continues work until the tree falls.

But in the essay you find that it is quite a trick to keep the saw running straight across. It tends to sag at the ends, so your cut is in a down-drooping curve. This in time binds the instrument so that even wedges cannot help your utmost strength in pulling it through. As for throwing a tree in any direction by leaving more or less fibre on one side or the other, that is a matter you would better smoke a pipe over.

Once down, you measure off your trunk and start to cut it into lengths. The saw almost immediately binds fast. You must find out why; and after your discovery of the reason, you must invent a remedy—unless you have been remarkably observing when watching the same operation in the lumbering. The splitting into rails, also, is full of minor problems having to do with the run of grain, the action of wedges, and the like. Perhaps you will do as I did first—expend considerable preliminary work only to find that the tree you have prepared is cross-grained and will not split at all! Then you will learn to diagnose your timber before you start to fell it.

And by the time you lay aside your first rail, you have done as much actual mental work, both in observing phenomena and in figuring from cause to effect long new lines, as you would have expended in following somebody's philosophy. In addition you have entered into new relations with a whole new series of acts.

The application of this is true all along the line. There are thick technical books on carpentry, books that require as close study as any course in college. In the backwoods one's curriculum is wide even on the side of mere practicability. A man must be constantly learning, and, as he learns, the various concealed properties of the possibilities and intentions of the complicated world about him become evident to him. He enters realms which in civilisation are, by common consent, delivered intact into professional hands.

VII

ON THE CONDUCT OF LIFE

CALIFORNIA JOHN was away on forest business most of the summer. Occasionally, however, he would ride over to see us. One such visit rises in my mind as particularly *à propos* to the remarks of the last chapter.

I was cross-cutting a big cedar log, stooping over as the long saw bit lower and lower; working eagerly. The old man rode up on his shining sorrel horse, Star, with his inlaid silver bit, his rawhide bridle, and his beautiful carved-leather saddle. Younger rangers now go in for the plain and business-like, and profess more or less contempt for the "fancy fixings," but California John was of the old school. He nodded, flung one leg over his saddle horn, and watched me some moments.

"Hard work," he proffered after a time.

I nodded back. I had no wind left for conversation.

"You had that sawed way through ten minutes ago," said he, after a time.

In sheer astonishment at this, I quit work and stood upright.

"Sawed way through!" I repeated stupidly.

"Yes—in your mind," said he. "Your mind's been sawin' that log through a plumb lot quicker than your saw. And you've been just *bumpin'* tryin' to catch up. That's what makes it hard work. There's your mind standin' first on one foot and then on the other, plumb distracted waitin'; and there's your body all out of breath hustlin' and strainin' to catch up. That's what makes it such hard work. You're tirin' yourself down, boy. You got to keep your body and your mind together on the job. Put on brakes, and don't get a thing done before it *is* done."

I quit sawing then and there, for I saw California John was in a dissertative mood, and that is worth much more than any number of cedar rails.

"That's the way to enjoy yourself," said the old Ranger comfortably. "Trouble is, when a man starts out to do a thing, he just nat'rally sees it all done before his eyes, and he strains himself day in and out till it *is* done. And mebbe it takes a long time to do—a month or two, say. And he hasn't had any fun with himself at all endurin' of all that time. He's just plumb wasted a month or two out of his life; and he probably won't get but one life—here. A man don't want to give a cuss whether a thing gets *done* or not, but just whether he keeps workin' along at it. If he does that, it's *bound* to get done, and without worryin' him. And he ain't so plumb feverish all the time.

He slid out of his saddle and squatted down by my cedar log.

"If you don't come to that way of thinkin', sooner or later you get this here nervous prostration," said he. "No manner of doubt of it. The world's chuck full of tiresome jobs that don't really mean nothin'—washin' clothes, and sweepin' floors, and choppin' wood that you burn up, and generally millin' around in a circle that don't get nowhere."

"Routine work," I suggested.

"Precisely. A man gets a notion that these jobs are wastin' his valuable time; he begins to hustle to get them behind him and out of the way. That means he does a poor job, and gets all wrought up and impatient, and tries to get in a week's work by sundown."

He reached up to rub his horse's soft nose.

"We got to make up our minds that a lot of our life is taken up with this routine work—same thing over and over, or work that don't *make* nothing. So we ought to have sense enough to find real livin' in them as well as in doin' real things. Any job's got a lot of fun in it, if you ain't in too devil much of a hurry to finish it. You got to do the job anyway; so you might just as well get the fun."

We drifted into a discussion of the various philosophies of life. I asked him if he had always been contented to live his kind of life in the mountains.

"Well," said he, "when I was younger I used to figure a good deal whether I was doin' all I ought to. Seems as if a man ought to do the best he can. He must have been put here for some reason. It's hard to tell *what* you're supposed to do. Now some books[1] I've read claim a man ought to make the very best out of himself he can, develop himself all round, and get as high up in the scale as he can. Then there's others that claim he ought to get out and do something definite—hustle along human progress—or he ain't no good at all. What do you think about it?"

"I suppose a man ought to build something in this world."

"What was that you said a while back on Nineveh and Tyre?" asked the old man quizzically. "There was the Moorish raid into Spain"—he suddenly interjected one of his astonishing surprises in general information—"that was a mighty serious affair at the time—worth headlines way across the page, with all sorts of murders, speeches, oppressions, and so forth. As near as I can make out the total results was a sort of old summer resort built of adobe mud."

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[1] California John, in spite of the apparent evidence of his vernacular, was a voracious and rather intelligent reader during the winter months.

"Adobe?" I repeated, puzzled.

"I forget her name. Place named after her near Los Angeles."

"Oh! The Alhambra!" I cried with a burst of amusement.

"Yes. Well, what's the use of doin' things?"

I offered no immediate answer to this, so the old man went on.

"Another thing: what did the Lord make such an everlasting variety of a world for, anyway? Ever think of that?"

"Never did. What of it?"

"Just this. I don't care what you know, or how big a head you've got, or what sort of an education, there's about four million things you don't know nothin' about. Somebody may know it, but you don't. You can't take up anything, I don't care what it is or where it is, without getting a whole heap of new knowledge about things in the world, and their natur', and how the cussed things act. A thing looks simple and dead easy to do—and it ain't."

I nodded, my thoughts on my recently and painfully acquired experience with cedar rails.

"The Lord's scattered things to learn all over everywhere. I don't care what you pick up, there's enough there to take all the strength of your mind for a while, anyway."

"'The world is so full of a number of things
I am sure we should all be as happy as kings,'"

I quoted.

"Who said that?" asked California John like a flash.

"Stevenson," said I.

"Well, he's dead right. Only I thought

I was the only fellow that had thought of it," said the old man ruefully. "There's quite a number of things; and to my notion in His eyes they're all one about as important as another."

"Oh, hold on!" I cried. "Do you mean to say that you really believe it's as important to ditch that meadow as to dig the Panama Canal?"

"Not to Roosevelt," replied California John quietly. "Mebbe to me."

He let this sink in.

"That's why the Lord made such an everlasting variety of a world for, so every man could find his own kind of knowledge. There used to be a fellow down at Toll House, who had been reading these health magazines until he began to eat nuts and raisins and olive oil and pine sawdust—and not much else. Old Doc Harkness was talkin' to him once when I was there. 'But, Doc,' says he, 'this yere editor don't eat nothin' else, and he works fifteen hours a day, and keeps healthy on it.' 'Sure,' says

Doc. 'And ain't they the healthiest sort of foods?' 'Sure,' says Doc again. 'Then why—' 'Do you like 'em?' the Doc interrupted him. 'Not very well,' said this fellow at Toll House. 'Well, then they ain't healthy for you. That's why there's forty-eleven sorts of grub—so you can get what you like.'"

He threw back his head and laughed.

"So when I figured all that out," he continued, "I see that a fellow was supposed to stick to what he likes. I like mountains and woods. And when I got the right slant on it all, I began to get onto the true innards of the situation. Everything's important. I don't believe one thing's any more important than another, *if a man's doing what he likes.* Some folks like Panama Canals, and some like meadows. Neither of 'em is goin' to boost the race much in the long run, because give 'em time enough, and they'll all be gone—like the old improvements on this meadow or those two fu-tile old cities you mentioned."

"What does count then?" I asked, a little bewildered.

"The man," returned California John sharply. "I don't know how, but that's it. If he's the right sort, why he helps the next fellow to be the right sort, whether he tries to or not, and whether he knows it or not. After a few thousand year of that sort of thing we get somewhere—and it don't much matter whether we get there through a Panama Canal or go by hand."

"If everybody felt that way, we would have little material progress," I offered rather feebly.

"Everybody don't like hogs," returned California John.

He rose stiffly to his feet and fumbled in his saddle pockets.

"That reminds me," said he. "Here's those magazines you lent me."

We fell into a discussion of their contents. Among them were the results of an investigation into the phenomena of spiritualistic séances. The undoubted authenticity of certain manifestations combined with their futile character engaged our attention.

"Nobody knows nothing about it, and that's just where it always ends. And you can go potterin' off into speculatings about it all till they land you in the padded cell," said California John. "And you notice these fellows always do land in the padded cell. The whole business looks to me plumb foolish. Of course, there's something there, but what's the sense strainin' your poor intellects trying to find out about it when there's so much else to think about. Probably in a future state all that will be as simple and easy as takin' a drink. A fellow'd feel mighty sick after spendin' his whole life here tryin' his little darndest to come at a whole lot of obscure problems to find it as plain as A B C over there. If he'd only had sense to wait, he'd have saved himself a lot of trouble and had time for what he was meant to pay attention to. And it would jar him especial bad if he found that pine trees and trolley cars and *ce*ment walks and doodle bugs and tomato cans were plumb mysterious and soul strainin' over there: then he'd be sorry he hadn't sized them up while he had a good chance, 'stead of wastin' his time."

"What makes you believe in a future life?" I asked him curiously.

"Common sense," replied the Ranger. "Just ordinary common sense. Don't need any miraculous revelations. Everything fits in too well. Hot weather makes you sweat, and sweat evaporatin' cools you off. There you have it. Every darn thing *I* ever discovered fits into everything else better than I could have planned it if you gave me all the time there is and a whole library full of books. And you can see the reason for it, if you're *sabe* enough. But how about us? You were askin' a while ago. What's the use of anything we build with our hands, except as how it makes us more of men; and what in thunder's the use of our gettin' to be more of men anyhow? Everythin' to do with us is plumb incomplete. It's just common sense to judge as how the game isn't finished with this here. Just common sense."

"What becomes of us?" I inquired.

"He uses us accordin' to what we have turned out to be. This here is a sort of nursery garden, as I look at it, like the one the Government has put in down to San Gabriel. By and by we'll be transplanted, same as those little seedlings."

"How about the fellows that don't make anything of themselves?"

California John pointed to the pile of débris by my cedar log—the broken, twisted, split and spoiled rails.

"Just culls," said he. "I reckon you'll find some other use for them there rails—firewood, stakes, and the like."

"There's a lot of them in this world," said I sceptically.

California John rose slowly. Star stooped his glossy head for the bridle.

"His patience is infinite," said the old man solemnly. He reflected for a moment. Then his eyes turned on me with the twinkling flicker of fun in their depths. "Son," said he, "I've often noted two things about trees: the stunted little twisted fellows have had a heap hard time, what with wind and snow and poor soil;—and they grow farthest up on the big peaks."

He swung aboard his horse and gathered up his reins.

"Got to go see whether old Cook's cattle are trespassin' again," said he. "That old fool will keep on till some day I'll call him everythin' *but* a gentleman."

VIII

THE STREAM

We have several good springs about the meadow, and at the foot of it they converge to form a tiny brooklet that sings and murmurs and gurgles through the alders. But a few hundred yards farther is a real stream—the water-course that marks the foot of the gentle declivity on which we live. The other bank of it rises very steep and high. It is grown with forest, and the lofty screen of it catches the breeze in all its fronds at once, so that the organ note is very solemn and austere. But the Stream itself is a robust and vigorous and cheerful person, always busy with affairs of its own.

For one thing, it is a mountain brook, and therefore occupied with finding its way down hill. It hurries around corners, and dashes down shallows, and tumbles over cascades, and swirls in eddies, and trickles down riffles with the rattling undertone of the rolling of little stones. Occasionally, however, it enters a still reach beneath overhanging bushes, where it flows smooth as a mirror, and in it one can see the sky. There the familiar little birds turn upside down and sideways searching for insects under the leaves, the waterbugs skate spasmodically here and there, and frogs kick about or sit in rows on the banks.

So far our Stream is very like another. But we have several features to distinguish us. Chief of these is a very large leaf. It grows singly at the end of a stalk two or three feet long, and is as wide as a small parasol. This must be literally understood. In fact Billy occasionally plucks one for use as a sunshade. It grows where it should, for the best effect—that is, in all sorts of niches, nooks, corners, and ledges, where one would be most apt to plant them were he going in for rockwork gardening effects.

Once in a while you will find them growing in regular ranks out from the shoals of the riffles in such a manner as to conceal the entire stream bed beneath. The effect is exceeding curious and tropical—the straight stems spaced, like a miniature forest, and the broad flat leaves above. They fill the creek-bed with green, and only occasionally can the observer catch the flash and movement of the bright water beneath. In the autumn they turn vivid with colour, and then serve more than ever as accents to the whole picture.

Early in our stay we sought out the best and nearest place for a bath. In these streams, the usual way is to deepen the closest approach to a natural pool by means of a dam. We found what we wanted, and were about ready to begin work on it, when fortunately Billy was seized with the spirit of rambling. She returned full of the enthusiasm of discovery.

We accompanied her. Down among the pines, across a fern flat, through a screen of young fir she led us. There below us the Stream rushed down a long, smooth, slanting rock and into a real pool. It was about thirty feet long, twenty wide, and looked to be six feet or so deep. The opposite side was a clear unbroken sheet of rock that plunged steeply. The bottom was of sand.

"That isn't the best of it," said Billy. "Come down closer."

We did so. A ledge of rock dropped straight off into deep water.

"You can jump in from that," said Billy.

Alongside of it, and a foot lower, another ledge sloped gently.

"Then you can walk out on that one," pointed Billy, "and rub down. Then you can dress on this dry one in the sun. And it's a regular dressing-room; see how thick the bushes are all around!"

The swimming-pool was thereupon established. Tuxana looked doubtfully at the water and shivered. She is a ridiculous dog. If you throw a stick into the water, she will plunge eagerly after it, no matter how cold the water may be. And she will keep it up all day. But if you pick her up and cast her in for the merely utilitarian purpose of a bath, she scrambles out hastily, and shivers in the most piteous manner. Our usual procedure was to have our own bath, and then to throw in the dogs. Tuxana knew this, and always lurked miserably in the bushes until commanded so sternly to come forth that she did not dare disobey. Then she squatted down, became absolutely limp, and weighed a ton. With a splash she disappeared. As soon as she came to the surface, she struck out vigorously for the opposite shore, scrambled out with great difficulty and much scratching on the steep rock, and took her position in the sun. There she sat, both hind feet off the ground, indulging in exaggerated shivers, eyeing us disgustedly. When we were ready to go home, she would cross back over a cedar log that had fallen to make a convenient bridge.

Tuxana is a very wise individual. I have read some enormous volumes to prove that animals do not think. This seemed to me in each case a desperate effort on the part of the author to bolster up his pride in being a man. It seems to be a matter of definition. I could quite legitimately prove by the same arguments that most people do not think. However it may be, something goes on behind old Tuxana's wrinkled forehead that results in some highly ingenious—and amusing—activities.

For example, and by way of dissertation, the nights in these mountains are pretty chilly, so that the back of the kennel is naturally the best protected and cosiest. When I would put the dogs out of an evening, they would scramble hastily to win the coveted position. Tuxana, being slowest, usually got left, and had to content herself with an outside and chilly bed.

Now, the other dogs are young and excitable. Tuxana evidently considered all the quantities of the problem and evolved the following stratagem, which she invariably thereafter employed with uniform success :

When I would knock the ashes from my

pipe, Tuxana, recognising the symptoms, would advance to the closed door, growling fiercely. The moment the door was opened, with a fierce bark, she rushed in the direction of the bushes. In the direction, I say; for immediately the other dogs, their hair bristling, their eyes alight with excitement and eagerness, had darted like whirlwinds into the darkness to get the game, old Tuxana dropped her bristles, wagged her tail, and departed for the kennel. There with many grunts of satisfaction she selected her corner. Five minutes later the other dogs, having scoured the woods, wasted many observations, and lashed themselves to a frenzy of excitement over nothing, returned to find her all settled for the night.

At first I could hardly believe the ruse intentional, but, after its third or fourth repetition, no other conclusion seemed tenable.

But to get back to our bath. After Tuxana had suffered several cold baths, she resorted to stratagem. At first she ran gaily over the cedar log to the other bank, as though she were sure the only reason we threw her in was so she would get to the opposite side. There she sat down, and wiggled the tip of her tail, and laid back her ears, and twinkled her eyes, and lolled her tongue, and generally looked as pleased and as ingratiating as she could. This did not work. After several days she tried shaking herself vigorously all over, just as a dog does when he has emerged from the water. I imagine she attempted thus to convince us she had already taken her bath. No go. Her final effort was the most amusing of all. She walked from the bushes in her most dignified manner, marched to the Stream and began to drink. She drank and drank until we thought she would burst. Then she glanced at us sideways and drank some more. We were puzzled. All at once Billy shouted aloud with laughter.

"Don't you see?" she cried. "The old thing is pretending she thinks you are offering her a drink when you make her come down here."

When Tuxana could hold no more, we

threw her in anyway. Since then she has given up the struggle and accepts cold baths as one of the inevitable evils of life.

Yet in her shiveriest moments all one has to do is to pick up a stick. Immediately Tuxana's ears are up, her eye alight. In she plunges, leaping far out, landing with a mighty splash.

As a matter of fact, one cannot blame Tuxana in the least. That water is very cold. It is born of the snows, and it flows through shaded ways, and swiftly. One hesitates considerably, plunges with a gasp, flounders wildly for the ledge, and emerges as rapidly as a fairly slippery rock will let him. The calling it a swimming-pool is somewhat of a misnomer. No one ever really swims, except the few strokes necessary to reach shore, and no one was ever known to go in twice to a bath. But the glow of reaction is fine, and a rub-down makes you glad you came.

A quarter-mile upstream, and just at the limit of our domain, are the Falls. There the ridge breaks down abruptly for a hundred feet or so, and the Stream must perforce follow. At first it used to be a great trick to get to the Falls without losing time and rending your garments. There is much snowbrush and chinquapin, and a tangle of little hills and hollows. Now, however, we have a trail, of sorts.

The Falls themselves are quite marvellous, and for several reasons. At the foot of a cascade is a wide and deep pool over which you cross by a log four feet through. Once on the other side you come to a broad slanting sheet of rock over which the Stream flows like a thin film. Scrambling up this you are face to face with the Falls proper. The Stream drops over a ledge in two branches. Halfway down, the ledge angles to form a deep recess or cave—eight or nine feet high, four or five deep, and across the creek-bed in width. Before this recess the water falls in a glittering veil. The cave itself is cushioned with thick green elastic moss, like upholstery. In it, as in a garden, grow tall ferns in groups, and more of the big-leaved plants.

From crevices in the walls are suspended other smaller ferns. A more beautiful green cool bower of dampness for a water nymph could not be imagined. As frame to the picture are jutting rocks around which the water divides or against which it splashes; fringes of ferns and saxifrage; and, square in the middle, just as a skilful scene painter would place them for the best theatrical effect, grow a clump of big leaves. And as a general surrounding, the forest.

The place is remarkable at any time, but in the late autumn, when the leaves and ferns have turned golden and orange, it is almost unbelievable. We once had a friend visit us who was a most excellent artist and a marvellous manipulator of the English language.

"Now look here," said he, "this is all very well. But you've spoiled my last atom of respect for the fellows who made the chromos. I used to think that at least they had originality—they must invent their subjects—that nothing like the things they depicted could possibly exist in conjunction. The other day you showed me the babbling brook flowing through the green meadow with cows grazing and trees on either side and the preposterously contrasting snow mountain accurately in the vista. Now this! If some grand opera star will kindly trip down these obviously property rocks and warble us a few strains, it'll be complete. By Jove! did you ever see anything like it?"

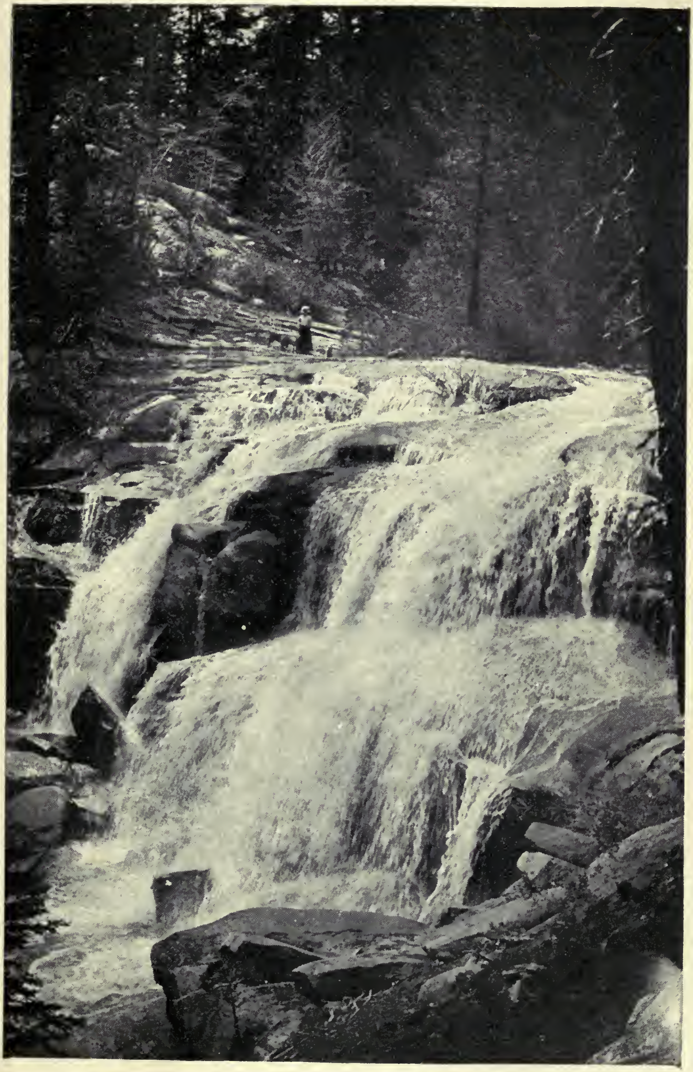
A swift dash carries you through the falling veil and into the recess. To your surprise you will find yourself quite dry; the great slab of rock lets through not the smallest trickle of moisture. The deep green cushion of moss is as wet as a sponge, but only through absorption from below. It is a queer sensation to look out upon the world from this fairy bower. The falling water wavers and sparkles, the blurred landscape flashes and dims, a super-brilliance of refraction fills the cave, the rushing sound of waters isolates you completely from the customary impressions of the forest, as nothing else could.

When you step outside again it is as though you are suddenly awakened. The trickle of the Stream, the songs of birds, the buzz of insects, the wind in the trees, your companions' voices burst on you as when a door is opened. Some day some one will find the nymph of the Stream at home, and so will fall under an enchantment to dwell always in that bright world apart.

The artist and I used to take long rambles over the mountains. We were continually discovering all sorts of interesting things: little lost meadows like green gems in cups of the hills; beautiful open parks of trees smoothly carpeted with pine needles, and strewn negligently with the great cones; hillsides of warm flowering bush; broad sheets of smooth rock many acres in extent; outcropping dikes like fortresses; ridges where the deer fed in droves. Among other things far back toward the backbone of the range we came upon the headwaters of the Stream.

It was in the fall of the year, and the deciduous leaves were gorgeous. At that time these lesser people of the forest get their true value. During the other seasons they blend so with the greens of their mightier neighbours that they are lost. But now the very evergreen character of the forest throws them into bolder relief. Here and there the dogwoods glow, visible down the aisles and through the glimpses for a long distance, their reds and soft pinks and rose-colours delicate as the petals of a flower. Around the clearings the azaleas form a border of the most brilliant flaming oranges and yellows; and the aspens are as golden as sunshine, and the oaks ruddy as a fire. While green, these trees have seemed a sort of shrubbery to the forest proper. Now they show in their true proportions, as trees of the sort we see at home and are accustomed to. And now at last, this being fully appreciated, the pines tower as the giants they are. It is an impressive season. The woods thus seem to have grown taller; the bird-songs have stilled; not a breath of wind stirs the pine-tops; the tricklings of little rills

CALIFORNIA



Upstream a quarter-mile we possess a hundred foot waterfall.

have hushed. A rather reproving portent is in the air. Those creatures that stir abroad, do so furtively, silently. A flash of wings, a glimpse of brown—and again the immemorial hush of the year falls across the forest like the haze of a great smoke.

We came, on this day, to a point on the slope of a hill whence we could see through the straight tree-trunks to a glade. Glade is the word, used this time in one of its few veritable applications. A lawn of green flung in a hollow, and half-way up a slope; a dozen big grey boulders around whose bases grew gorgeous bushes; half as many clumps of the same gorgeous bushes scattered here and there; a fringe of orange-leaved azaleas; and the great solemn trees standing in stately ranks as though guarding. And down through the forest ran a straight vista between the trees, uniform in width, carpeted with green, in which flowed a little brook. The sun was low and ahead of us. The shadows lay long across the meadow, and the forest was a mysterious alternation of smoky-looking shade, impenetrable darkness, and the brilliance of sky through tiny openings. From the forest seemed to flow that lucent mist one always observes when looking across barriers to a westering sun. The artist gazed for some time in silence. He was deeply impressed.

"Gee!" said he at last. "If the fairies don't pull off a fandango every moonlight night, they don't know a good dance-hall when they see it!"

We broke through the bushes to the meadow. There out in the grasses was a round sunken pool, ten feet across, pellucid, utterly calm. From its lower edge stole a timid trickle of water. It crept through the grasses down the meadow, disappeared under an old burned tree-trunk, trickled in musical drops over another, gathered courage as it grew, finally gurgled away down the long avenue guarded for it by the stately trees. The Stream was born.

IX

THEOPHILUS

Theophilus is a bird. He perches on a stub at our gateway, watching cynically, his head cocked slightly to one side, all who pass into our enclosure. He has the air of a robin looking down at a worm; of a bald-headed, very wise old sinner who has nothing more to learn; of a vigilant and faithful guardian of his master's interests; of utter detachment and indifference—whichever you please. Presumably no one worth his displeasure has yet passed our gate, for he has never stooped over to rap anybody with his great yellow bill. However, he is all ready to do so. Personally I treat Theophilus with great respect, for I have to pass in and out of that gate several times a day.

Theophilus has a tremendous yellow bill, somewhat on the toucan order, only one-storied, and of a slight Hebraic cast. It is about three feet long, and has a grim curve at the corners of the mouth. His head is not quite so long as his bill, and is a beautiful sky blue. *Was* a beautiful sky blue, I should say, for age has dimmed the colours of his youth. A fiery upstanding crest of red completes his upper works.

I regret to state that Theophilus either is hump-backed or is sunk in a continual grouch. When one possesses blue, red, yellow, and green wings with black polka dots, one should be entirely happy. Theophilus is up here alone all winter, though, and he may be merely humping his back philosophically against the snow and the cold. Certainly he keeps his tail spread bravely. It is a blue tail, with a broad yellow edge to each feather. Blue and red legs, a red breast and yellow belly, and yellow claws complete Theophilus's chaste and tasteful colour scheme. His eye, I regret to state, is small and malicious. His attitude, as I have intimated, is one of perpetual challenge; and his motto he carries, neatly lettered, to test each chance comer. It reads:

DO YOU SPEAK THE LANGUAGE
OF OUR TRIBE?

Mr. Dan Beard is primarily responsible for Theophilus. Some years ago he published in *Outing Magazine* full directions and measurements on "How to make a Totem Bird." Theophilus is a modification —at long range—of these ideas. Subsequently I saw Mr. Beard and made various inquiries. He was much interested in Theophilus, but vague in his answers as to how one was supposed to solve specified mechanical difficulties of construction. A certain surprise characterised his attitude. You all remember that stage situation wherein the alleged wizard is commanded under pain of death to prove his powers by making the Nile rise. Desperately—but hopelessly—he goes through as elaborate mummeries as he can invent. In the midst of his performances, in rushes a messenger. "Sire! The Nile is rising!" he shouts. "*Is* it?" cries the wizard in stupefied astonishment. Well, somehow, Mr. Beard's expression when I told him I had built a totem bird on the inspiration — not the specifications — of his article, reminded me of that wizard.

"Look here, Beard," said I finally. "Did you ever build that totem bird?"

"Oh, yes," said he; then after a pause, and with a quizzical grin—"with a pocket knife. I worked out the details, and then just enlarged them."

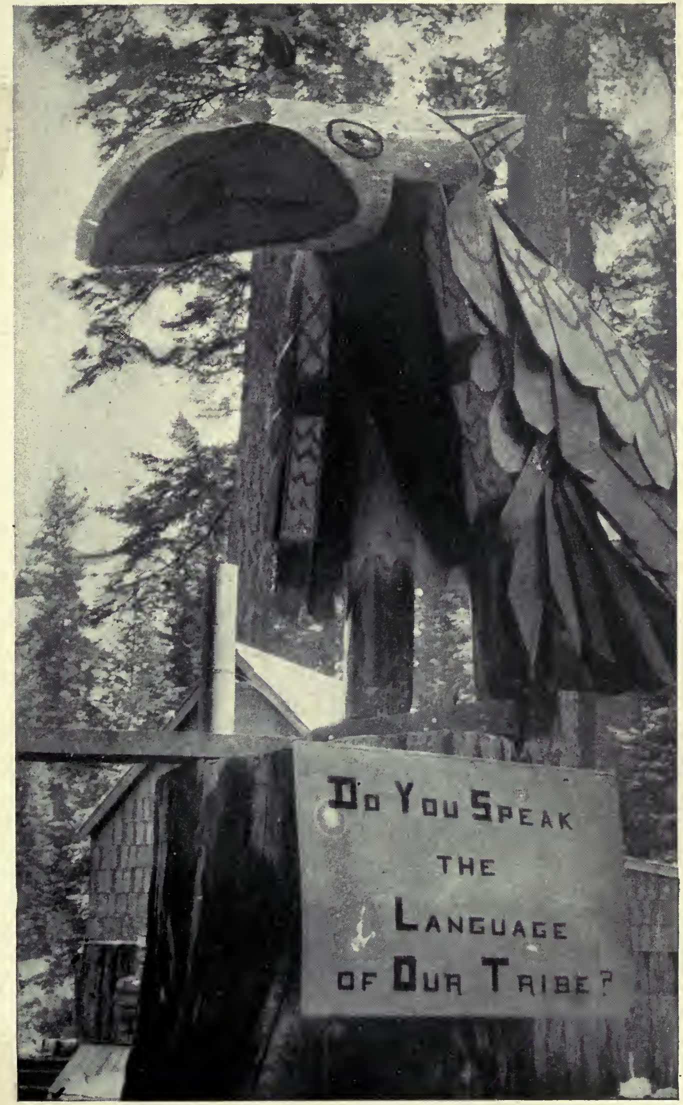
"Right," said I. "I thought you never tackled it with an axe and a cross-cut saw."

Theophilus was made on smaller measurements than the original; but even then his component parts weighed each more than I could lift.

In cutting the head and body I had help from the three boys of our neighbours, ten miles away. After that Billy and I struggled with him as best we could. His body and legs went up first. I managed to rig a tripod, or "scissors," of three poles over the stub, arranged a slide of old boards, and thus, an inch or so at a time, got the dismembered carcass to the top without dropping it off on the ground. This was no slight task, and several times I literally wrestled with that fowl. Once atop, we had further to stand him upright, and fasten his feet. The wings we built from shakes and some scraps of four-inch boards; and nailed on. The tail was of shakes arranged fan-wise. Shakes shingle-fashion imitated the feathers of the back.

But with the head we had the most difficulty. It weighed a good deal more than we could handle comfortably, and it had to be lifted bodily into place from a narrow and insecure footing. This I managed to accomplish, then called on Billy to steady it while I spiked it fast.

Up to now we had controlled the creation of Theophilus, arranging the details of his anatomy to suit ourselves. But at this moment there intervened Theophilus's own familiar spirit, his oversoul in the universe of grotesques, to determine his final character. Billy held on as tight as she could; and I spiked as carefully as I was able. Yet when we stepped back to contemplate the result, lo! it was on crooked. Lamentations could have no practical results, for it was too late. But when Theophilus's beautiful colours were applied, we found that his familiar spirit had wrought better than we knew. As the paint defined his crest and bill and eyes, he took on that half-comical mysterious attitude of listening and looking for something coming along the trail, which has from that moment set Theophilus miles above us in experience and wisdom, and has summarily taken him from our fashioning hands as a thing, and made him an individual entity. I no more feel responsible for—or capable of—Theophilus, than I do for the pines or the weird granites of Shuteye. I confess he slipped beyond me. The method of sawing him, of nailing him, of pegging him down I comprehend; but


DO YOU SPEAK
THE
LANGUAGE
OF OUR TRIBE?

He is like the gargoyles on the great cathedrals, appropriate and pleasing.

his soul and what he means and his general attitude toward me and toward life in general I do not understand. He is hardly friendly, as is a dog; nor yet inimical in any way—perhaps merely aloof, and very superior.

As you come down the road through the forest, and rise gradually to the crest of the gentle slope that gives over to our Meadow, Theophilus is the first object to rise above the hill-line. In the distance and against the sombre magnitude of the forest, his gay plumage makes a very pleasing spot of colour. In spite of the gaudiness of his attire and the preposterous proportions of him, he never seems out of place. Anywhere else he would be utterly and absurdly grotesque; but here, at once subdued and thrown into relief by his surroundings, he is like the gargoyles on the great cathedrals, appropriate and pleasing. But I would feel a lot easier, if I only knew whether he really approves of us or not.

X

ON BIRDS AND LIVING THINGS

I AM very glad I was once somewhat of an ornithologist: I am equally glad that I am not one now.

The ornithologist's interest in birds is in direct ratio to their rarity. I well remember the first flock of Evening Grosbeaks I ever saw. It was in the dead of winter and in the height of a wind and snow storm. The hard snow cut like knives, and the prospect was one of half-buried fences, tossing bared branches, and swirling, blinding flurries sweeping a beaten country-side. The birds sat stolidly in the tops of two elms by the road, resembling a sort of gorgeous upgrowing fruit or cone rather than living creatures. With a leap of the heart I recognised them—by plates and descriptions. I shall never forget how slowly and lazily that horse turned into a drift where I could tie and blanket him; how stiff the buckles were, and how numb my fingers; the difficulty I had in putting together the shotgun! The Grosbeaks never moved. So finally I shot a fine male; and the whole band uttered a concerted cheeping, and flashed to the top of another tree where they again perched stolidly. I stuffed a little pellet of cotton down my specimen's throat; plugged his nostrils, wrapped him carefully in a paper cone so his feathers would not be ruffled. The same performance was repeated. After I had attended to this prize, I set myself to observing their habits. They had none. Merely they perched in the top of that tree, occasionally remarking to each other what a fine warm winter day it was, while I slowly congealed. After a while, as though at a signal, they departed into the swirling snow.

Save for the identity of the birds and a certain quality of weird aloofness, that was not an extraordinarily interesting or illuminating incident, yet in my collecting experience it was a bright particular star of a day.

The recording of three out of the five Connecticut Warblers then observed in Michigan was another triumph. At that time but a score of this extremely rare bird had been seen anywhere, and some doubt existed as to whether or not it should be considered a hybrid. I do not know its present status. You may imagine the prize was too great to risk in observation. A lightning recognition, a quick aim, and that adventure was over.

I have lain belly down for hours straining my attention to catch stray glimpses of some infrequent migrant, while thousands of the "common" species fairly overran me. Long eager days have I followed the lure of a single pair of flashing wings. Who cared to bother with Goldfinches, and Redstarts, with Maryland Yellow Throats and Towhees when the woods held possibilities of such rarities (to our region) as the Prothonotary, the fields a faint chance that a Dickcissel had wandered so far north? Sparrow Hawks were uninteresting because you could get near them, and Cooper's Hawks because you could not.

Yet this is true; that in order to recognise at a glance the rarities, you must also know all the common species. Else how can you know that every feather is not a prize? And as the common species are everywhere at all times, and so constantly to be met with, it follows that shortly you will be able to identify them at a glance. At one time—the skill has departed to a large extent now—I could name the genus and often the species of a bird as far as I could distinguish the manner of his flight; and the exact species of any one of three hundred varieties by any portion of his song or note. Perforce I learned how to look for birds, where the different species were to be found and whither their habits of life led them. I had to do this in order to eliminate the rank and file from my rare and interesting objects of pursuit and identification. I am very glad I have been something of an ornithologist.

Three mornings ago a fine male Evening

Grosbeak flitted out of the pine forest to perch on the Cabin ridge-pole. I thought him a remarkably handsome person, but stupid. After turning himself around to exhibit fully the wondrous symbolism of his plumage, he flew away. In the meantime a Junco was earnestly carrying on an interesting and animated conversation with a Chickadee and a most ridiculous Pigmy Nuthatch. This particular Junco comes to see us every morning before we are up. We can recognise him, even before we open our eyes, by the way he flirts his wings. He belongs to an extremely common species indeed; but he is a most interesting and companionable person. I concluded that I am very glad I am no longer an ornithologist. For while a scientist of that brand is interested most in the rarities, the rest of us care more for the individuals. There are more individuals than rarities; therefore we have a much better time.

These forests are extraordinarily populous with birds. In the early morning the woods ring and echo and re-echo with their songs. One gains the impression of a vast multitude busy with its daily and accustomed affairs. The joke of it is, those affairs go on just as busily when we are not here. It is a community we have nothing to do with. We are foreigners. When one takes a walk into the forest, he counts for nothing. The creatures are aware of his presence, and at least doubtful of his intentions; therefore they interrupt their occupation, their song, their journeys, to keep a bright and suspicious eye on him. Even when he hides long enough to restore confidence to the forest at large, there are one or two amateur detectives who decline to be fooled, and who hover distractingly and silently near at hand. The forest modifies itself, ever so subtly, to man's domination.

But when one sleeps out, and in the morning merely uncloses his eyes to the dawn, the real business of the forest world goes on full swing as though he were not there—as it would were the world of men absolutely non-existent. He has shrunk from an influence to a mere intelligence. Over him woods life passes unruffled, happy, absorbed in its affairs, utterly unself-conscious, in the manner of the wilds.

This, to us, is one of the chief delights of sleeping out—when we do not have to get up early and travel, of course—to watch the early-morning occupations of the forest world.

The Sierra night here is one of the stillest things on earth, not even excepting a calm at sea. The wind falls utterly; there seem to be no nocturnal songsters, like our old friend the White Throat of the Northern forest; the chill of the mountain night sends all humming and murmuring insects early to bed. There is literally nothing to make a noise, save the far murmuring brook, and that is so distant as to supply only the faintest wash of monotone to the picture of Night. An occasional owl or coyote, the horses moving in the meadow, the tinkle of Flapjack's sweet-toned bell, actually *break* the silence, sometimes in an almost startling manner. The tall trees are very motionless and solemn and black. So still are they that almost it seems the stillness of some tension, as though their heaven-pointing tips conveyed some silent invisible fluid of virtue straight up from the overcharged earth, as a candle flame sometimes stands unwavering in its upward flow of abundant heat. To a city dweller sleeping out for the first time in these forests, the night is sometimes terrifying, not from apprehension of wild beasts or falling limbs or any other material danger, but from the subtle big awe and mystery of something intangible he cannot understand.

On no other forest with which I am acquainted does the enchantment lie so heavy. It is as though the lifting of the last broad sunray across Shuteye was as the lifting of a golden wand. Somewhere in the depths of the woodland is the Sleeping Princess; and all the trees and bushes, the thickets, the birds, and the creatures have been stricken to immobility pending her awakening. Especially is this illusion near to the truth when the moon sails the heavens. Down through the still darkness of forest aisles you look to a little glade all of most beautiful and delicate frostwork. From blackness projects a single branch of silver. Long shadows lie immobile across openings of light. But these shadows, and the trunks of trees, and even the silhouettes seen against the moon are not of the blackness of starlit nights. Across them all is a milky lucent veil. This is a new forest, a new world into which you have graciously been permitted to wander. The grosser substance of the material universe has been magicked away, leaving the wonderful form-soul of them to stand until a touch shall crumble them to a pinch of white moon-dust. You move by sufferance, the only noisy, blundering, restless creature in the world. And the great silence and stillness rebuke you.

There are a few familiars to the great magician who are allowed certain privileges of the night. Of these the Owls are the most remarkable — is not the magician always attended by an owl or so? The big Horned Owls with their booming *whoo, whoo, whoo,* are in tune with the solemnity of an earth fallen under enchantment. But there is another species—the Short-eared Owl—that represents well the diabolical side popularly attributed to all necromancy. He clucks, he shrieks, he laughs, he shouts insultingly and sardonically. The woods are full of his ribald jeerings. Like the coyotes, two make racket enough for a dozen. When one of these irreverent imps breaks loose among the echoes of a forest fallen utterly silent, it seems that the farthermost stars must awaken and give ear. Yet when the row is all over, you find that not the tiniest bird, not the smallest leaf has been aroused from the deep trance. The imps have beaten in vain against that supernal calm. All they have succeeded in accomplishing is to render frantic Brudder Bones, but as Brudder Bones is only a pink-eyed, white bull pup seven months old, his judgment does not count for much.

To the west the trees of our forest are apparently of almost an equal height. Yet there is one, far distant, that, either because it stands directly opposite a chance opening in the east, or because it really is taller than its neighbours, is bathed to its waist in golden sunlight before any of the others have caught a single ray. Therefore it is known as the Dawn Tree.

By the Dawn Tree we know that it is time to get up. And under the Dawn Tree, we suspect, lies the Sleeping Princess, for with the touch of morning on its crest the forest stirs. Birds chirp, a tiny breeze murmurs through the highest tops, certain spiders swing perilously from silvery cables, the bees hum by on their way to the flower gardens of the meadows. And far up, so high that barely we can make them out, silver-flashing birds flutter across the emptiness of blue ether, like the spirits of morning out of the east.

Inch by inch the sunlight descends, until the forest is bathed in light, every aisle and thicket of it, a golden green light seen at no other time of day. Then indeed the life of the woodland is at high tide. All the insects are out, and the birds after them. Everything with a voice has something to say, and takes time to say it. The freshness of morning is in the air, and the exhilaration of a brand-new untried day.

In the complicated bird-life of the forest are many planes and stories. Some dwell entirely in the tip-tops of the trees, rarely descending below the level of the uppermost branches. Others inhabit the mid-regions; while still a third class divide their time between the lower limbs and the brush. Besides all these are the distinctly ground-dwellers, such as the Quail and the Towhee families.

Birds are in one respect a remarkably complacent race. Each species has its own way of doing things, from which it never varies, no matter how overwhelmingly unanimous the example set by other species all around it. And the examples are numerous enough and close enough, one would think, to tempt at least the youngest and most enterprising to try a new way of doing things, if only to see how it seems. But no; the conduct of life has been settled ages ago, there remains only the pleasant task of filling the frame with as much brightness and joyous colour as possible. "No," says young Master Thrush, "singing to the new risen sun from the very tip of a big fir may be very pleasant, and may do very well for Robins; but none of us would think of it for a moment! And Magnolia Warblers are undoubtedly very worthy people; but none of our set ever wears a yellow spot on the rump." Among human beings extreme conservatism usually means also a gloomy and cheerless outlook on life. Here are creatures more settled in their ways than the Chinese themselves, yet able to preserve also a free and joyous spirit.

On this account our Robins amuse us immensely. They are of course accustomed by tradition immemorial to close-clipped green lawns, well watered, with shade trees, conservatories, vines, gravel drives, angleworms, and clipped hedges. In those surroundings the self-respecting Robin can do himself justice. We all know how well he lives up to his station in life—three or four proud hops forward, breast swelled, head back, aspect noble; the ostentatious and theatrical cocking of the head sidewise over a wormy-looking spot; the sudden dab, the braced legs, the reluctant worm, the triumphant pose as the victim comes away. It is as well done as is the knee action of the horses brought to the door. Not every Robin can have his setting as elaborate as he might wish, but at least he has reason to expect something in the way of a well-kept sward.

Up here there are no lawn-mowers, no lawn, no angleworms, no nothing. We cannot support a single Robin in the style to which he has been accustomed. Nevertheless, our Robins, in place of going seedy and losing interest, as so many people do in the circumstances, make the best of it. Not a ceremony is omitted. What matter that the lawn is only the meadow grass cropped down by the horses? it is emerald green; what matter if there are no angleworms at all? one can attitudinise just as carefully over any old doodlebug. Our Robins hold as rigidly to the good-form of angleworming as any fox-hunter to the rules of the game, even when the prosaic aniseed replaces the living quarry. I respect the Robins for that, and I must confess that their touching efforts to make our front yard look aristocratic sometimes almost succeed.

We have also a very busy and friendly inhabitant of our bushes next the house that we call the Plaintive Bird. This is because of his note, which complains gently and plaintively of something that has gone wrong. The grievance is evidently of long standing, for the tone has become just a trifle querulous. Perhaps it is an ancestral outrage, the memory of which has become traditional and the protest against which is a family duty, for the bird himself is as lively and cheerful as you please. He is especially partial to the low-growing chinquapins, and when he is occupied in stirring up the peace of that thicket, he seems to pervade it from one end to the other. He scratches among the leaves in great, two-handed swoops that send things flying. Then he hops out to the edge, cocks one merry black eye up at us, voices his plaintive *we-o-wee*, and examines to see what he has unearthed. Generally that proves to be nothing. He does a lot of vigorous scratching for meagre results, but he seems to enjoy it, and he is certainly a friendly and fearless person.

With him are the Purple Finches, hundreds of them. The salted clay of our chimney possesses a fascination for them. At any time of day we can flush a dozen or so by coming around the corner on them suddenly. They scurry away with a great fluttering of wings, but if we stand quite still, even for ten seconds, back the bravest venture, their crimson head-feathers ruffled, their eyes upon us, but their eager little bills at work on our precious structure. They are very tiny people, and weak, and the chimney is solid, but I sometimes think they will in the course of years finish by carrying off our fireplace piecemeal. They love, in the early morning, to perch on the straight topmost finger of the giant firs, there to enjoy the first sun, and occasionally to favour us with their sweet and rambling warble.

Hardly second to these two in their claim on a semi-domesticity are the Juncos, or snowbirds. They and their cheerful flirtings in and out, the neatness of their costume with its black muffler and white waistcoat, and the two flashing white feathers of their tails are so familiar a feature of our meadow that we should miss the azaleas no more than them.

These three—the Purple Finches, the Plaintive Birds, and the Juncos—stand to us instead of domestic fowls. They live always inside our fence, they never wander far abroad, and they are always to be found. The other birds dwell aloof, or cruise it here and there in the forest, or drop in on us occasionally for a friendly visit and gossip.

Of such the most amusing are the independent, swashbuckling bands of Nuthatches and Chickadees. For an hour or so after sunrise you will have no indication whatever of their existence. Then far off in the woods you become aware of a voice like the blowing of hundreds of elfin tin trumpets. The sound comes nearer; is heard to be intermingled with clear modulated whistles and the distinctive *chick-a-dee-dee-dee* of that small and independent individual. Suddenly every tree is covered with comical, scow-built, tiny birds, moving busily—and impartially—up, down, or around the trunks; every twig is quivering with the weight of bright-eyed, quick, eager little Chickadees, upside down, right side up, seeking eagerly and minutely every possibility that might conceal an addition to breakfast. The host sweeps by you as though you did not exist. The little fellows are friendly enough—there is nothing scornful or exclusive in their attitude, as there is in that of the Stellar Jay for example—but they haven't time for you.

You have no trunk to run up and down, no twigs from which to balance. They are not the slightest bit afraid of you. Merely they close about you, and move on. One moment the trees are swarming with bewildering life; the next, they are empty. Receding in the distance you hear the chorus of *toot-toot-toot*, *chick-a-dee-dee-dee*, *dear me*, and the harsh squawking of the jays who seem to delight in acting the part of derisive camp followers to this elfin army.

Other free spirits of the woods are the Woodpeckers. They range as the mood strikes them, swooping in long curved flight, uttering loud and triumphant cries. From the tops of dead trees they beat out a long roll in the sheer joy of noise; on half-decayed logs they deliver the purposeful, spaced, heavy blows of the workman; they romp around and around tree-trunks in an ascending spiral, chasing each other in an ecstasy of play. Like noisy schoolboys, they break all the solemnities. No hush of evening or languor of noon is proof against their rattling or their sonorous *weecher, weecher!* At long intervals the king of them all passes our way royally, the great Pileated Woodpecker, big as a hawk, with his black, white-striped body and his flaming, upstanding red crest. I imagine he looks on Theophilus, the totem bird, as some sort of distant relative. He retreats with dignity, but he retreats, and if we are to observe him, it must be from the passive standpoint of the proverbial "bump on a log."

Before getting up in the morning, we seize many such opportunities for close observation. Our camp blanket is red, and to this day a certain Humming-bird is hoping yet to solve the sweetness of what he thinks to be a gorgeous and gigantic flower. We hear the swift darting hum of the little creature, followed by the deeper tone as he hovers suspended. There he balances, sometimes not a foot from our faces, gazing intently on that great patch of red.

The Chipmunks, too, tiny fellows not over a quarter the size of the Eastern species, consider the bed somewhat of a dare. Its base is a flake of hay embezzled from the horses' late-autumn supply, and that forms the attraction for the little squirrels. They consume ten minutes screwing up their courage, dart fearfully under the edge of the canvas, reappear carrying a head of barley, perch on the headboard to eat it, one beady black eye comically aslant at us. It is exceedingly interesting to see thus such delicately fashioned woods creatures at such very close range.

To the larger Pine Squirrels, however, we are to be considered in the light of an inexcusable outrage. A great tree-trunk descends to the head of our bed, and down this every morning a Pine Squirrel would venture, to tell us what he thought of us. He squatted quite flat behind, raised himself slightly on his fore-paws, and chattered nervously. Every moment or so he would jerk his tail and advance another foot or so down the tree. The nearer he got, the shorter his descents, the jerkier his tail, and the louder his scoldings. Finally the awful proximity would break down his nerve-sustained courage. With a shriek of released terror he would turn and skitter madly to the top of the tree, gibbering as though pursued by ten thousand devils. Once in safety from his imaginary dangers, he congratulated himself for some time in a low voice, and examined his precious tail to see if it had sustained any damage. Gradually his indignation mounted. He looked down and saw us still there. After a minute longer of doubt, he would decide to try it again.

Between the dogs and the three kinds of squirrels common about our Cabin, is perpetual war. By experience each knows accurately how far it can be adventured. Apparently bold Chipmunks perch saucily within a few feet of the dogs; the latter, beyond a quiver of the nostrils, betray scant interest. They know, and the Chipmunk knows, that the way of escape is from that point infallible. Apparently prudent Douglas

Squirrels appear in an opening fifty yards away; instantly with eager whines the dogs tear away in a scrambling pursuit. Sometimes they butt their noses against the tree up which, with terrified chatterings, Mr. Douglas has just managed to escape. Sometimes he loses his life. It is a fair game, and the nature of a dog is to hunt. We would not be justified in interference. Also such incidents do not seem to discourage the squirrels in the least. Instantly we appear, the word goes about through the woodland that the Dispensers of Favours are returned accompanied by their Dragons. In the squirrel mind, evidently, one consideration far outbalances the other, for within a few days ten of the little animals appear where before was but one.

They are easily tamed, but we have never attempted especially to gain their confidence. It would not be fair. California John was once telling us of a fawn that came every morning to the head of his meadow to feed among the domestic animals.

"I believe you could tame him!" cried Billy. "Why don't you try?"

"Oh, he'd gentle all right," replied California John, "but, ma'am, I don't believe in gentling no wild critter whatever that I can't take care of. It just makes it easy for the first fellow with a gun or claws that comes along."

The Mountain Quail, beautiful helmeted and plumed birds, found our clearing good during all of one season. Since then they have disappeared, not only from our meadow, but from our ridge. I suppose the feed is better somewhere else. Animals and birds like to frequent the same places, but it is a mistake to suppose that they necessarily confine themselves to one locality. I believe they have various estates which they inhabit as the fancy strikes them—a Watering Place on Whiskey Ridge; a Cone Forest on Pine Ridge; a Piñon Preserve on Goat Mountain, and so on. On a year when cones are scarce with us, the squirrels desert us almost completely, and we hear of them on the mountains away across the tremendous gorge of the Joaquin. We are sorry to lose the Mountain Quail, and hope some year they will come back to take the shutters down here. It was great fun to see the well-groomed, sleek, anxious mothers marshalling the ranks of their scurrying, comical, small progeny.

XI

THE MILL

THERE is a sawmill two miles distant, over near the bluffs. It growls away to itself, and pretends it is wonderfully big and important, whereas it is in reality a very little mill indeed. For twenty-five years it has been amusing the forest by biting at her fringes. Two million feet a year is considered pretty good.[1] It sends its lumber out by teams consisting of from six to ten span of horses and mules, a journey of three days. The driver rides one of his wheel horses, and for twelve hours a day is lost in thick clouds of dust. At the mill itself one circular saw keeps as busy as it can —when it is in working order; two teams of mules haul the large logs in from the woods; and a donkey engine yanks the timbers from the bed to which they have fallen. The mill-hands are mostly the sons of small ranchers, young mountaineers, and the like. The woodsmen, experts with axe and saw, have, some of them, drifted out from the pines of Michigan and Wisconsin. They work hard, as all woodsmen do, and have no time for visiting. Two miles in the mountains would be a new measure of distance to a motorist, say. We see the twenty or thirty of the mill crew only when we visit the scene of their work. They are non-existent in our life.

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[1] A modern plant cuts fifty or sixty million a year.

This general rule falls to the ground in the case of a few, however. Some, by virtue of especial character, have grown to be our friends.

The master sawyer, for example. All day he stands by his levers, sending the log carriage back and forth, turning the log over by means of the nigger hooks, gauging accurately how best to get the most good lumber from the material. Each log is a problem by itself. For a great many summers his eyes have followed the incessant movement before them, until they have grown steady with a tired abstraction. When we ride over to the mill after our letters, we always go in to see the sawyer. The rattle of the machinery and the exultant crescendo shriek of the saw fill all the possibilities of sound. We touch him on the shoulder and let him know we are there. He grins cordially at us; we grin cordially back at him. Perhaps we shriek a word or two at the top of our lungs. That is all, but we go away feeling we have had quite a satisfactory visit. This sawyer has lived all his life in the mountains—in fact, the man who wrought at our meadow so many years before bore his name. He has property, and a family, and a slow benevolent patience that has taken care of every forlorn and incompetent relative, in direct defiance of his own interests and those of his boys. In repose his face has a Lincolnian sadness, but when he smiles it twinkles all over like sun on broken water. He possesses a fiddle on which he plays jiggy, foot-tapping things. His home is down the mountain at the Forks. There he often furnishes the music for some of the dances. The quadrilles are especially grand, for then the musician, both eyes closed, calls out. No one knows what he says, or what it all has to do with the figures; and no one cares. Each remark is jerked out with an accompanying strong sweep of the bow and swaying of the body. It is all about "honey!"—"Pig'n a corn!" "Po-liteness!" "Swing round," "Go down, Moses!" "'Coon up a plum tree!" and various inarticulate but inspiring sounds.

"Uncle Charley" has a wife and four half-grown boys. Every once in a while some or all of them take the long ride up the mountain to see us. The boys patiently try to catch chipmunks, or go swimming, or generally pop around the woods. The grown-ups settle down for a good talk. The mountain people are exceedingly interesting. They live a life that depends more than the common on its individual resource; and at the same time the better class of them possess a remarkably high standard of taste and education. Books, and good ones, are abundant. In addition are certain qualities of hospitality, the breadth of view incidental to the meeting of many types on a plane of equality, and independence in the manner of thinking. I like the mountain people.

For here you must know all your neighbours for fifty miles about. In more crowded centres one picks and chooses even his most superficial acquaintanceships. As a consequence certain classes of men fall outside your experience completely, and to that extent your knowledge and sympathies are limited.

But a sparsely settled region is different. The dweller therein has full opportunity to know all his microcosmos. He knows Uncle Charley's folks, with their more refined tastes; he is on intimate terms with the Forest Supervisor's people of college education and sweet and gentle breeding; he comes in contact with the Washington men—the inspectors, timber experts, grazing men, all the numberless technical experts; he meets and talks with tourists and campers of all classes on their way to the higher peaks. In addition he knows all about his other neighbours; and as any society, no matter how sparse, possesses in itself the elements of a community, he is in contact with all classes, from the debased caterpillar-eating Indians at the rancheria, through the half-breeds, and on up past the "white trash," to the different independent, semi-patriarchal and always individual households scattered through the Hills. If Smith's colt dies of rattlesnake bite, it is a matter of personal interest; if Jones's son is getting to hang around the saloon at the Corners, you must do something about it. Public opinion is nowhere so concretely expressed nor so powerful in affecting general attitude as in the mountains;—nor so powerless to affect individual attitude. A man easily works out his conduct of life — whether for good or evil—and lives by it "spite of hell or high water."

And to a large extent he is allowed to do so. Men are taken objectively in the mountains. That is to say, their idiosyncrasies in the manner of doing things or of looking at things are taken as so many unchangeable, natural phenomena. One adjusts himself to them just exactly as he would take into consideration the sets of current in swimming a horse across a stream. The more introspective peoples are apt to ask themselves whys and wherefores.

"How *could* Jones think and do so and so!" we cry. "I should think a man with a grain of sense would have seen it! I can't understand how a man gets at feeling the way he does!"

So we go on worrying ourselves with the reconstruction of Jones.

The mountaineer, on the other hand, explains everything by saying that that's the way Jones does, and lets it go, and forgets it.

As well try to explain why Jones has a sharp nose. The attitude is at once a result of and conducive to the fullest expression of individualism.

From the mill also we draw our friend the hunter. He stays on the mountain all the year round. In winter, when the snows come, he looks after the mill's property—shovels snow off roofs and generally keeps things in repair. Constantly he deludes himself that he is going to quit and go down to the valley. He never does. He lives high up on a rocky knoll. It is facetiously fortified with old pieces of pipe stuck out at all angles to represent cannon. When you get up there, you are met by a cynical 'coon at the end of a chain. He retires promptly to the inner recesses of his kennel. A moment later you find yourself in a really comfortable and clean cabin. It is decorated with lithographed calendars, skins, deer's antlers and Indian baskets. The latter are our hunter's specialty, and he will wax enthusiastic for you over the variation in a border pattern.

About once a week he comes over to see us, generally armed with rifle and revolver. He perches on the steps for an hour, gravely exchanges news as to game seen during the week, confides to us as to where and by whom deer have been killed, relates a few trapping incidents that curl Billy up inside, declines to stay to a meal, and departs. Generally he brings us in our mail by way of excuse. Each spring when we return, he tells us carefully just how the winter has been. Quite of his own volition he snow-shoes over occasionally to see how the Cabin is getting on. Two years ago, he says, it was buried to the ridge-pole, and only the tip of the smoke-pipe was sticking out.

Then there were, until this year, the Stout brothers. We met the first as he was "nicking" a big sugar pine. He is one of those very tall, very slender mountaineers with the strength and spring of whalebone in his long, slim body. His brothers are like him. They are musicians. One blows through a cornet, one twangs a guitar, the other scrapes a fiddle. One evening they packed all these things on their backs, collected Uncle Charley and his instrument, and walked over after dark for a grand musical pow-wow. Uncle Charley's wife, all her boys, her adopted Indian girl, and three young people who were staying with her were already occupying the Guest Camp above the Cabin, under the trees. We built a roaring camp-fire, uncased the instruments, and——

But let us go back two days. It was noon, and I had walked over to the mill to post some letters. With me were Tuxana and Rattler, the latter at that time six months old. The old lady was padding along at my heels as usual, but the puppy, gangle-legged and ridiculous, was far afield investigating everything. Naturally, when we approached the mill, the mill dogs, seven in number, of various and astonishing mongrelism, rushed forth. As naturally Rattler fled for the tall timber. This aroused Tuxana. No one had paid any attention to her, but the outrage of seven against the one youngster was too much for her. Without saying a word, she shot out from behind me and hurled herself, like a missile from a catapult, upon the histrionic seven.

Tuxana's usual method of fighting is to clamp and hang on. It is at once simple and effective, for Tuxana has a face like a catfish. But to-day, against numbers, she shifted her tactics. In about a minute she had the redoubtable seven licked to a standstill. Some fled with shrieks, some lay down and held all four feet in the air as token of submission, some crawled under buildings. The last one she tackled, however, put up more of a fight, and him she proceeded to slaughter in approved fashion. We hauled her off, with some difficulty, and I led her around by my belt strap until her bristles had gone down. For this energetic combat was Tuxana much admired.

On the evening of our projected camp-fire music that last antagonist had the bad taste and judgment to follow the Stout boys over to our camp; and they had not noticed it.

Here was Tuxana's chance. She is the most peaceful old girl that ever wagged a tail, but a personal enemy she never forgets. Riding along the roads at home we pass fifty dogs to which Tuxana pays not the compliment of a side glance. Then her ears cock forward, her hair bristles, her eyes fix on a canine away off in the distance. She is off with her tearing scramble. And no matter how far away that dog is, when he sees Tuxana coming he departs rapidly.

So, no sooner was the orchestra tuned up than the most unholy row broke out from the woods. We all ran out to see what was the matter. Tuxana had missed the throat hold for which she always tries, but had clamped firmly on the dog's flank. There she hung on, biting deeper every instant. The dog, frantic with fear and pain, was snapping blindly in all directions. When the men tried to allay the battle, they made the mistake of reaching for Tuxana. Thereupon the other dog, his fore quarters threshing in all directions like the head of a scotched snake, bit rapidly and accurately. In six seconds the three Stout boys and Uncle Charley had from two to five bites apiece. Then somebody grabbed the mill dog by the neck. When we finally got Tuxana away, she carried with her a substantial piece of that luckless canine.

Billy opened her medicine case, and the victims lined up in a row as though they wanted to buy tickets for some popular success. Bandage rolls, calendula, and peroxide were consumed in vast quantities. Billy had a chance to try her skill.

Billy, inspired with the idea of acquiring knowledge useful to the Trail, once joined two classes—First Aid to the Injured, and Cooking. In the former she learned how to distinguish drunkenness from apoplexy. In the second she gained some skill in the construction of Charlotte Russe and Floating Island. Unfortunately in the high country we have not yet run across anybody lying by the trail—bottles are not easily transported in quantity on a pack-horse. Neither have we arrived at a yearning for such desserts contemporaneous with a possession of eggs and milk. A family doctor showed her how to bandage, however; and now the knowledge came in very handy. She turned out a good workmanlike job, and her four patients were wound to the elbows. But we hadn't enough good fingers among us to make a single note of music.

The mill is our point of touch with the world outside. Through it we get our mail, occasionally. Its teamsters are very good to us in the matter of tucking in a box or so of supplies when they come up the mountain empty. It is quite an adventure to take Flapjack and go over to the mill. We never know what we are going to find. Uncle Charley's wife may have sent us a little sweet corn, or some eggs, or a watermelon; there may be letters or a magazine or so; or possibly some precious article we sent for so long ago that we have utterly forgotten it turns up at last as a pleasant surprise. Or again the total results of a long journey through the woods may be a circular and two unreceipted bills from home.

This year the mill has sawed its last in the little clearing where it has lived for twenty-five years. It has made a tiny hole in the forest, and has left some ugly débris in its slashings. But even where it cut two years ago, the young trees are springing thick. The acreage of its cut is so small that there is not much danger of fire, and if fire is kept out, the forest will soon re-establish itself.

XII

ON STRANGERS

WHENEVER you see a dust through the trees, you look first to make sure it is not raised by stray cattle. Then when you are certain of your horse and man, you start a fire in the little stove. That is an invariable rule in the mountains.

The logic is simple, unanswerable, and correct. The presence of the man argues that he has ridden from some distant point, for here all points are more or less distant; and the fact in turn proves that somewhat of exercise and space of time have intervened since last he has eaten. Therefore, no matter what the time of day, you feed him. It works out like a mathematical formula.

Similarly in other camps, after you have chatted for a few moments, some one will slip quietly away. A sound of splitting crackles, a thin, fragrant smoke odour enters your nostrils. After an interval there is brought to you a lunch to which your attention is invited. The lunch varies from beans on a tin plate and rank coffee in a tin cup, to tea and yeast-bread, and gooseberry jelly and layer cake, according to whose camp you may happen to be in. But its welcome is the same, and you find yourself responding avidly at ten o'clock in the morning to the cordial invitation, "eat hearty." Such is mountain hospitality and mountain convention. It is as much a matter of course as the urban ring at the door bell, and is no more to be omitted than the offer of a chair.

"Light and rest yo' hat"; "Eat hearty"; "Take care of yoreself." These three speeches can cover the entire gamut of good-fellowship —greeting, entertainment, and good-bye.

It must be repeated; one knows fewer people in the wilderness, but he knows them better. He has leisure to walk all around them, to appraise them, sound their depths, and make up his mind about them. In crowded centres one is apt to know types and the examples thereof; here one knows individuals.

Perhaps a little more philosophy might be permitted. The city has certain work to be done—street-cars to drive, elevators to run, horses to conduct, papers to sell, shirts to make. To accomplish it she possesses millions of hands. A slight push from each pair will accomplish the task. So we see men whose vitality is low, whose vices are many, whose working days are few, whose capacities are scant, filling well enough necessary industrial positions. A man can get drunk, sober up, and still wash windows and sweep the office. The headache is uncomfortable; the task nevertheless is done. That is because it is a single task, a simple task, an invariable task. For all other needs the city has other hands. A feeble push at the wheel is unavailing. Multiplied by a million, the wheel turns.

So we constantly see wrecks of men,

sodden with drink, eaten with disease, enervated with vice, taking somehow their small part in the life of the city, and receiving therefrom their living, such as it is. The city makes them what they are, but it permits them at least to subsist. Elsewhere they would not last a week. When they drop, at the end of a greater or lesser period of efficiency, there are plenty of others to take their places. The triumphant vitality of the city is unlowered. Its mighty works go on, so that in ten years it has built, cleansed, developed wonderful and titanic things. But the average vitality and efficiency of its individuals are throughout very low.

In a new country, on the other hand, a man must be strong, healthy, and self-reliant. It is not sufficient that he acquire the ability to punch holes, certain that for all time the man next—or one like him—will stick in the rivet, and the man beyond tap with the hammer. Such partial activities would here avail him little. He is not a finger or an arm or an eye or any other single member of an industrial body; he is the industrial body itself. If he wants a thing riveted, he must know how to rivet.

And since riveting is not the only thing necessary to life, he must possess reserves of vitality beyond the tap of the hammer. He must be healthy, free from the corroding vices. When he loses his vigour, he loses his chance. His community, scattered, miserly of men, needs his whole ability. It is not satisfied with part, and if he deliberately withholds himself, it soon dispenses with him entirely.

Of course it would be a stupid argument that would claim all virtue for the country. That is not the purpose of this homily. The foregoing remarks may be more clearly understood when you focus them in this manner:

In settled communities it is of course both impossible and undesirable to welcome all comers. Sheer weight of numbers would preclude acquaintance with everybody, even were that desirable. As a matter of fact, it is not. The exceptional humanitarian may see some interest in the Jones-Brown-Robinson flat-dwellers or commuters with their narrow, stuffy interests, their rubber plants, their small circle of friends, and their appalling boredom. Most of us are thoroughly satiated after the first dreary meeting. We prefer to pick our friends according to our tastes, and we do so. Thus we have an enjoyable time, but we are apt to narrow our sympathies.

Out of civilisation, however, it is possible to meet and enjoy every passer-by. Some are more interesting than others. And some are dangerously close to being utter reprobates and scalawags. But one and all are vital, otherwise they would not exist. In the course of a season one meets the components of a social cosmos, at close range, sympathetically, on a common ground of equality. Thus one acquires several new points of view. Once in Arizona, while following the chuck-wagon for the experience, Billy was quite taken with the appearance, the manner, and the conversation of one of the cowboys. After she got to know him quite well, we informed her of the known fact that he was a cattle rustler and train robber. Since then she has had a modified though somewhat puzzled opinion of hold-ups.

Again, we were camped on an old forgotten trail above one of the tremendous cañons of the Sierra Nevada. About evening a man with two pack animals drifted in and made camp. His being there puzzled me. The trail had long since been superseded by another several miles shorter. No way led from the upper cañon through this particular meadow. Unless he had made a deliberate détour, I could not imagine why he had hit that old trail. Voicing these cogitations to Billy, she offered an easy solution.

"Go over and ask him," said she.

"And perhaps he has a band of sheep

trespassing up in the ledges—or a prospect this side the minarets—or some other good reason. It isn't polite to ask people things," I replied.

"Oh, dear!" lamented Billy, "I don't think I'll *ever* get used to this Western watch-the-other-fellow-to-see-if-he's-going-to-hit-you-first way. Now I should have asked him straight out, if I were a man."

"And got into trouble," said I.

For it most decidedly is *not* polite to ask a man his business or where he is from. When a stranger shows up out of a howling wilderness, a great desire fills your soul to know all about him, and whence he comes, and how far it is, and whether the trail is rough, and whether he's had fishing, or killed a deer, and all the rest of it. That is natural. But you must not.

And therefore your powers of observation grow on you. No detail of equipment escapes your eye. Sherlock Holmes would have enjoyed comparing notes with a good Westerner. One sizes up his man and his outfit and draws his conclusions, silently. If there is no reason for concealment, a few logs of wood blazing and an ounce of tobacco glowing will bring the fact out. Our man had heard that the old trail existed, and he thought he'd try it—that was all.

Occasionally it is exceedingly difficult to keep "tongues off." Billy, Wes and I were camped near the main crest. We were about as far from rail-roads, towns, and settlements as it is physically possible to get. At sundown a horseman rode in.

"How's chances for feeding my horse and me?" he asked.

"There's the meadow," said I, "and I guess we can manage to rustle you a little grub."

He unsaddled and turned his horse loose, joined us at supper and breakfast, resaddled, and departed.

There was nothing unusual in that. But note this: he had no blankets, no grub, no slicker, not even a tin cup. He was at least four days' ride from the nearest house. Moreover, he was heavily armed with a carbine and two Colts.

We talked on indifferent subjects all the evening. He made no mention of his errand or where he was from, or how he subsisted, or whither he was going. So we did not ask. In the morning he caught up his horse, saddled him, and approached me.

"How much?" he inquired laconically, thrusting his hand in his pocket.

"Nothing."

"You're the first folks I've seen that didn't take all the traffic would bear," said he, drawing his hand out again. "Them trout tasted pretty good."

"You must have been in the valley," I suggested, for I knew mountain hospitality too well to suspect it.

"I have," said he grimly, "—and then some." He looked up at me keenly. "That's where I ate last, three days back."

While he was tightening his cinch preparatory to departure, he told me his story in little jerks. Evidently he had been sizing us up ever since the first moment he had hit our camp.

He was a sheriff, from Goldfields, in pursuit of two horse-thieves. He had left at a moment's notice, without preparation. The trail had led him over the desert, one hundred and ten miles of it, across the great ranges twice, now back again. He trusted to luck for food.

"I've had pretty good luck," said he. "I'll get 'em yet."

But often and often inscrutable visitors will sit all evening at your camp-fire, discuss with you the country, the trails, politics, mining and the county supervisors, only to leave you next day none the wiser as to their identity, their business, or even their names.

XIII

OUR NEIGHBOURS

THE Cabin is not on one of the highways of the mountains. Our trail leads nowhere but to ourselves. One thoroughly conversant with the turnings of the Ridge and its numerous cañons will here find a short cut to the Shuteye country, but these people are few. Nevertheless, down our road in the course of the season many and varied visitors find their way.

There are the Rangers, of course. The summer headquarters of the Supervisor are at the other end of the Ridge. Thence come the men of the Forest Service on their varied business. We know them all, and like them, and are always glad to see their ponies sidling up to our hitch rail. The summer is their busy season. All the manifold business of the Forest is pacing its swiftest. Fire fighting, sometimes sixty hours at a stretch, trail and bridge building, the regulation of grazing, the watch for trespass, the sale of timber, the constant supervision of all the special privileges the National Forests now offer the public, the compilation of reports, all keep them riding and working all day and every day. When a few hours' leisure offers, they string barbed wire around their pastures and build posts, cabins, corrals. Constantly they are meeting new emergencies, new people, new ideas. They develop rapidly. In three years a raw mountain boy, or a youth callow from the forest schools, has turned to a quiet, steady-eyed, self-reliant, toughened piece of steel and whalebone capable of and enthusiastic for any duty to forward his beloved Service.

That is, if he sticks. It is a constant source of interest and amusement to contemplate the weeding-out process. Each year brings its crop of recruits. The newcomer generally cherishes a hazy idea that a Ranger's chief duty is to ride abroad pleasantly on patrols, to count rings in tree-stumps, and to see that everybody obeys regulations. Ten to one he is set at stretching barbed wire, or splitting cedar posts, or digging holes, or handling large jagged rocks. When his hands are all cut and skinned, his muscles sore, and his back tired, he is called to ride a hasty six hours to a large hot fire on a side hill. Here he works for two days in a broiling sun, over broiling coals, with little water, and perhaps no food. He gets faint, finally sick. He tells the Head Ranger these painful facts, and is surprised to discover that he is expected to go ahead anyway. Other men are working methodically, as a matter of course, when they are so dry that their tongues swell, and so tired that they stagger. When that fire is corralled, all ride back home again. Our new Ranger goes to bed to sleep it off. After a few hours he is awakened and told of another fire in another direction—a bigger fire than the last. He is filled with consternation.

"We're dead!" he cries. "We can't do anything more!"

"We've got to," is his reply.

Of course this is the rough end, but the rough end of rangering presents itself oftener than the smooth middle. At the end of the season our youngster—if he sticks—has been literally tried by fire. He looks with contempt on what he used to consider hard work. And if furthermore he can develop intelligence, tact, and resourcefulness in dealing with men, and an ability to get on with his fellows, he is in a fair way to become a good Ranger. About one out of four succeeds.

And the other three depart, their souls filled with a great disgust, their delusions dissolved, their faith in humanity shaken. One function only have they served—that of supplying those of sterner quality with the material for camp-fire jokes. Rangers have been known wickedly to sympathise night after night with the terrible woes of a novice with the sole purpose of drawing those woes into speech. And sympathy goes far toward loosening the tongue of a youngster whose feet are sore, whose back is lame, and whose poor hands are full of barbed-wire punctures.

The men who remain three years in the Service are generally there to stay. They are filled with an enthusiasm hard to understand until you have ridden and worked with them, studied their problems, and shared their triumphs. In the old days when the Land Office was in charge and appropriations few, it was no unusual thing for a Ranger to spend up to half his monthly salary for necessary tools he could procure in no other way. Now that the Bureau of Forestry has substituted an honest and efficient administration for the old régime, the same spirit manifests itself. A certain Sub-ranger, with wife and children to support, was promoted to Ranger with an increase of three hundred dollars a year. A friend congratulated him on his raise in salary.

"Damn the pay!" rejoined the Ranger; "it's getting rid of that 'sub.'"

Every once in a while these men make up their minds to resign. They never do. The reason for the resolution is generally this:

When the Land Office was in charge, the income from the National Forests was about $60,000 a year. Then Congress howled wildly about having to appropriate for their support some $400,000. Under the Bureau of Forestry the income jumped rapidly to over a million and a half. Did Congress allow this fund to remain long at the disposal of the Service? Not noticeably! It promptly passed a bill turning all receipts from the National Forests into the General Treasury. Then it calmly went on appropriating lesser and more inadequate amounts. All along the line the Service is crippled for lack of funds; and yet it is turning in yearly to the National Treasury four or five times what it receives as an allowance.[1]

So when a Supervisor, by forethought, hard work, and crafty planning, makes a good showing with twenty-five men, his reward is not opportunity of extending his field or carrying out broader ideas. He is told that as he can do so much with twenty-five men, his force during the coming year will be reduced to twenty. Encouraging, isn't it? Then he gets blue, and frames his resignation. About that time some one rides in to tell him that somebody's running a donkey engine without spark arresters, or that Cook's cattle are trespassing, or that Smith wants a contract for shake timber. In the meantime, lightning has started a fire over by Chiquito. So he spreads his twenty men thin, and tells every one to hustle, and forgets that resignation.

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[1] Conditions in this respect have gradually improved since the above was written. There is room for plenty now!

This particular Forest Supervisor lives three miles from us, under big firs and sugar pines, and before a wide meadow. His headquarters have grown from small beginnings. Here a room has been added, there an office. Gradually the proud living-room, in which some years ago we used to sit around a roaring fire, has been overshadowed until now it is used as a store-room. A wide verandah under the roof, or a three-sided room—whichever you please—is edged by a tiny bubbling stream. From it rises a stair to a Juliet balcony. The kitchen is entirely detached, and has no roof. Although thus the mistress is likely to acquire pollen and fir needles in her coffee, she also sweetens labour with a sight of green trees, blue sky and yellow sunlight. Beyond, in fragrant azaleas, is a tool-house; across a ravine is a barn. This must be reached; so a substantial rustic bridge spans the gulf. When a thing has been needed, it has been built. The great solemn woods are full of surprises, pleasant ones always.

And as the place has grown, so has the community. When you visit the Forest Supervisor, you pitch your tent in the cedars, tap the flume of water, and dispose your household gods to suit yourself. One has a little growing cedar tree next his bunk. On this he hangs things, and thus has a Christmas tree all the summer through.

As more people come, the boundaries are extended. Already outposts have pushed down across the creek, over the hill.

All sorts of people are to be met. Rangers are continually riding in and out—mountain men, graduates of the universities, all moulding to the same type. They have their reports to make, their instructions to get. Inspectors visit for weeks at a time, men from Washington, widely travelled, cultivated, intensely in earnest. Technical men pursue their varied and interesting investigations, timber, entomology, grasses, roots, sociology —everything to which a scientific mind gives its attention. They come with their assistants and their outfits, and stay a week or so at a time. One learns more from a college professor here than in college. If there are Rangers enough in, there is a big bonfire some evening, and the scientist talks. And always the men of the mountains are there with suggestion, complaint, inquiry, business to proffer. They hitch their saddle animals to a tree; the pack horses stand patiently with down-drooping heads. Spurs clanking, they walk gingerly across the verandah and into the office. For a time the drawl of their voices is heard. After a while they come forth, mount their animals, and ride away. Cattle trespass, free use of timber, timber sales, mining claims, water rights, pasturage, roads, trails, cordwood—anything and everything may have been their business. Lastly are the tourists, the campers, on their way through to the big country. Most of them are worth meeting, as they come from all classes, from all corners of the world outside. Sometimes they are amusing or even irritating in their ignorance. They cannot understand why they should not put their animals in the meadow.

"It's public property," they argue: and then go away to spread the gospel of bitterness. This is now to be noted in regard to opposition, little or big, to the Forest Service as at present conducted; it springs invariably from selfish interest, whether a petty indignation at refusal of horse-feed absolutely necessary to the public business, or the concerted efforts of men like Fulton, Clark, Heyburn, and their ilk in the Senate to serve the land-grabbing interests.

Over all these varied and sometimes incompatible people our Supervisor rules easily by reason of his tact, his knowledge of human nature, the absolute unselfishness of his purposes, and his deep personal humility. He is my friend, and it is ungracious to appraise a friend: but I hope this slight tribute to a disinterested public official may not be amiss.

Like most strong, efficient, and enthusiastic men, our Supervisor retains a great deal of the small boy in his composition. Thus in case of a celebration his mind naturally reacts in the direction of bonfires. If the forester is due for a visit, or the Technical Assistant is presented with a baby, or the land-grabbers lose a fight in the Senate, or old Jones finally comes to time in regard to the trespass matter, or it's Fourth of July, or one of the Rangers' kids has a birthday, or somebody feels especially happy or anything—why, everybody must come to the bonfire!

They are real bonfires; none of your little haphazard piles of brush and sticks! First a tall post is planted. Around it, wigwam fashion, are stacked split poles of pitch pine. Outside them, ends up, are other poles, logs, and miscellaneous fuel as much as can be placed. When the affair is fired, the flames leap straight up fifty feet. At a distance, a most respectful distance, we sit, some on benches, most on logs or on the ground. For a time the fascination of that roaring, waving pillar of flame is sufficient. The sparks flying upward in the good old scriptural way, the leaping heat waves, the tongues of flame reaching like licking tongues through the hot gases of the fire, the shadows dancing in and out of the circle of illumination like mischievous boys, the half-revealments of the gigantic trees out in the darkness, all hold the gathering contemplative and silent. But after a time conversation begins. Simple refreshments pass, pipes and cigarettes glow. Then the Supervisor likes to read aloud. He holds the real attention of every member of the miscellaneous crowd. After every sentence or so, he interpolates comment of his own. Whatever is foreign to the Sierras, he interprets in terms of these mountains. It is a treat to hear him read "The Ballad of East and West" to the Rangers. Each phrase has its running comment.

"'*—and a raw red roan was he*'—that's like that old horse of yours, Jim; he wasn't much for looks, but that colour is tough. Kipling knew what he was about when he selected that type."

Or a little later:

"'*—the snick of the breech block,*' more like our army rifles, you see. Bolt action. I don't think much of that for ambush work. Winchesters wouldn't make such a racket."

So it went. The trail, the weapons, the animals, the men—all were plucked from the half-mythical, wholly unreal East and translated into things these men handled every day of their lives. The drama of the poem was no longer merely academic; it became alive. He snapped shut the book.

"How about it, John?" he demanded. "Do you believe it? Would you have done it that way, or would you have fetched him a clip side o' the ear for being foolish?"

Dazzled by the light of the now sullen coals we stumbled through the velvet dark to our waiting horses. The animals snorted softly. We rode home through the dim forest, unfamiliar with the night. The horses knew the way. Only overhead were the glorious heavens, crackling with the brilliant stars of the high altitudes.

XIV

THE GUEST CAMP

It is a very simple matter to have guests at the Cabin. We all sleep out under the trees; and there are plenty of trees. Up to the number of two or three we feed our visitors—and make them help wash the dishes. If more come, we pass them our camp cook outfit; show them the lower spring; and leave them to their own devices.

Of regular, invited guests, asked from home and met at the stage terminal, we have had very few. It is a little difficult to guess how people will take doing their own laundry and going without sheets. A few choice spirits have made the four-day struggle to get here, and have professed themselves pleased. One was an artist. He constructed a terrace, three turnstiles, a section of rail fence, helped build the barn and put together a fine wash-bench. The nearest approach to his profession was the accomplishment of four stained-glass panes for one of our windows. He pasted heavy bond paper over the glass, and then with watercolours evolved the most fantastic and ridiculous heraldic devices for each of the four of us. The effect was quite perfect, for he even imitated the uneven tinting caused in the genuine article by the varying thickness of the glass. Beyond that he did not lay brush to canvas. This artist, a girl friend of Billy's, my father and brother, are so far the only "brought-in" guests.

But of others there have been many. Every once in a while we run across people prowling about the Sierras, out for a summer vacation, because they like it. That very fact goes far toward making them eligible for the Guest Camp. If we like them, we ask them up for a week or two. Thus we have gained new and valuable friends without the usual, sometimes fruitless labour of searching through multitudes of acquaintances for them. The love of the mountains does the sifting for us. From all parts of the country they come, east and west—young girls and their brothers, college professors and their wives, boys just out of school, travellers, just plain people. They are varied enough in occupation, in training, in age, in social condition, but they all pass fearlessly by Theophilus's challenging sign. Did I tell you of that? It faces the Trail, so that all who run thereon *must* read. It says:

"*Do you speak the Language of our Tribe?*"

And sometimes our friends among the mountain people come for a few days, bringing their beds, their grub, their horse-feed with them. Aunt Belle, the sawyer's wife, is with us two or three times a season. The boys accompany her, and two or three others whom her kind heart has lifted from the heat of the midsummer for a breath of mountain air. They have camp-fires, and explorations, and great times. Occasionally funny things happen. One party of them went for a ride, got lost, hunted for a way out, fell into the dusk of evening, finally decided they must stay out over night. They tied their horses to trees, scraped together beds of yellow pine needles. Finally one of them descended to a creek to get a drink. Somehow a log seemed familiar, though he could not tell why. After a moment his eye caught sight of something white. It was a towel. The party were within fifty feet of our swimming-pool!

Again, it began to rain just as a party of nine hove in sight. We took them in. For three days the storm raged. We all lived in that little two-roomed cabin, sleeping at night on the floor, roosting any old way in the daytime, rustling firewood, cooking in the fireplace while the grey rent veils of mist swept through the trees and across the meadow. We had the best kind of a time.

At first visitors suited themselves as to location. Now a fairly definite Guest Camp has been established by a sort of evolutionary process. It is near the lower end of the meadow, quite hidden from the Cabin, on a dry slope among smaller trees. A considerable space has been fenced in with fir poles. Places for balsam beds are levelled. A framework needs only a saddle-blanket or so tacked up to make a private dressing-room. It has shelves and a bench, and a place for a tiny fire directly in front. The lower spring is near by. Altogether it is very attractive and convenient. The Artist fitted it with swinging gates and dressing-tables and the like. If we could persuade the Artist to come back one of these times, we should soon possess all the comforts of home. And this thought occurs: if thus an artist conducts himself under influence of the great forest, what should we expect from, say, a plumber? Would his surplus energy manifest itself in improving our water supply? More likely he would write verse.

I have spoken of the sifting effect of the mountains. This is strikingly corroborated by the fact that in our five years we have had but two really unwelcome visitors. The first was a woman, harmless, well-meaning, angular, vain, elderly, and most abominably talkative. She came from the Valley and spent the summer within striking distance. Like a rattlesnake, she struck suddenly, but, unlike a rattlesnake, without warning. We found her one afternoon comfortably seated on the verandah. When we came in sight, she began to talk. Her conversation assayed one low-grade idea to the thousand words, and she had five or six hundred ideas which she wished to elucidate before sundown. She was near fifty, but was still kittenishly in the running. One o'clock was the hour of her arrival, and near sundown the time of her reluctant departure. Next time she hove in sight Billy saw her first and dropped behind the brush like a quail. I managed to sneak out of the bedroom window and up the hill to the fir thicket where hangs the hammock. Only the Artist was left, working innocently away at his terrace. From time to time I heard his plaintive calls, and his loudly spoken wonder as to where we could have

Near the lower end of the meadow.

gone, and his confident assurances that we would soon be back. In four hours he did this three times; which, after all, was meagre punctuation to the high-pitched, nasal voice. Finally she left. It still lacked an hour to sundown. I do not know what the Artist did or said to her, but she never called on us again. He was very dignified, and received our hypocrisy with scorn. When we had quite finished, he told Billy he did not consider it dignified for her to crawl on her hands and knees behind bushes.

The other unwelcome visitor was a sheepman. The grazing through the forest roundabout is leased to a limited number of sheep. Ordinarily we do not know of their existence, for they feed in two small bands which are lost among the numberless ravines and defiles of the mountains.

But one day or another we catch sight of a vulture sailing high up in the blue. By that we know the flocks are approaching, for only with the bleating multitudes are these cynical keen-eyed scavengers ever to be observed in our clean Sierras. Then across the undercurrents of sound, far away, we catch a faint mellow murmuring. Hardly can it be identified as having a definite objective existence. Rather is it like those undervoices one hears amid the roar and dashing of a rapid. Then a faint dust is discernible as a shade of grey against the atmospheric blue of distance. A single *blat* is carried down wind: a single deep clang from one of the huge musical bells affected by the mountain sheepmen. We hear an elfin barking, then a nearer single crash. Finally the murmurous many-voiced multitude is opposite us, on the other hill. We can distinguish, above the steady monotone of the sheep, various calls, the enthusiasm of dogs, an occasional shot. The voice of the flock grows to a crescendo, passes, dies slowly away. The grey dust-haze settles. Again we hear our Hermit Thrushes and our streams.

The owner of the sheep at the time of which I speak was an old-timer of the autocratic and patriarchal type. Generous, good-natured, big of frame and jolly of demeanour, he was the soul of good-fellowship—as long as his will was not crossed nor his purpose opposed. But through all his life he had absolutely ruled his little community. His women obeyed him; his sons he ruled even into middle age; and his neighbours he succeeded in overawing by a certain abundant vitality and fierceness of rage. Add to this the fact that he had come early to the mountains before rules and regulations were dreamed of and that he had fought, and fought successfully, through a great many cattle wars and over a great many trespasses.

He had sent up a relative of his, also an old-timer, to oversee his sheep herders. By the way, there are no shepherds in the West—the term is too scriptural and dignified in its connotations to apply to these men. They are always sheep herders. This second old-timer was a fat man, brimful of steaming energy. He would waddle and puff and stew breathlessly up the steepest slopes—but he arrived. He had a choleric blue eye and a hearty disposition. Common report said he had been considered an undesirable by the Canadian Mounted Police. Certainly the directest way to an explosion was by mention of that body. His ideas were those of the old-fashioned sheepman: get feed; it doesn't matter how or where, but get it. This class has made plenty of trouble, both for itself and for the government officials.

Naturally our little hundred acres were excluded from grazing. Nevertheless, it proved to be a constant struggle to keep the sheep off. The herders were Basques and possessed of a conveniently erratic knowledge of English. I showed the old-timer the blazed lines. When the sheep grazed over the boundaries, however, he was conveniently absent. On his return he was volubly sorry: it was a mistake by those stupid Basques—but the sheep had the feed. We went away for two weeks, but returned at the end of ten days. The sheep were feeding in our front dooryard, and the herders were lying stretched out by our cabin gate. I rode up and ordered them off. Two of the Basques failed to understand even vigorous sign language. The third looked me up and down.

"I t'ink they more of us as you," said he. "We go bimeby."

He had failed to take in all my equipment. I thrust the holster of my Colt's to the front.

"All right! I go! I go! I go!" he cried hastily.

They went. After an interval of some weeks I spread the news that I was going away again. I did not. Two days later, just after daylight, the flocks poured over our ridge. That time I "threw a scare" into the Basques that lasted out the season. Also I wrote to the sheep-owner informing him of the facts, and requesting him to issue definite instructions to his men.

Then came the delicious part of the

whole episode. This sheep-owner, unsuspected, must have consumed vast quantities of Deadwood Dick, the Duchess, Ouida, and Fourth-of-July orations. I received eventually an epistle from him which was worth all the bother. The man is probably fifty-five years old, well off, of a good education, and with wide experience. Yet his letter was that of a boy of twelve. Oh, it was well enough spelled and written! But the sentiment. He spoke of "rich men's playgrounds" — Billy and I chortled with delight over that—and "never will I bend the knee to arrogant wealth"; and "no minion of plutocrats" and the like, until Billy and I had to look again at our bank-book to see if the iridescent dream might not be true. He ended with a patriotic burst about American citizenship. If his sense of satisfaction over this effort half equalled our joy over its grandiloquence, his ruffled spirit must have been soothed.

All this looked mildly like war. But

some of his men managed to set fire to the woods near one of their camps. Fortunately, Billy and I happened to pass that way. We corralled the fire while it was yet small. The whole affair did not impress the Company favourably. The sheep-owner's lease was not renewed. A Frenchman took his place; and all has since gone well.

XV

THE RIDGE

OPPOSING desires tug gently at us all the time. The fascination of the Cabin, the delight in labour, the wish to get things accomplished tend to keep us at home: the delights of exploration call us abroad. We cannot well do both.

It is remarkable how quickly human nature makes for itself an environment in which to try its powers and spin out its petty destinies. There is no real reason why we should finish our meadow ditches, our rail fences, our trails, our graded road now—or ever, for that matter. We are very comfortable here; we lack nothing essential. Yet each day we rise to a joyous anticipation of new accomplishment. When it is suggested that we go fishing, or explore the mountain toward the old Sage Mill, or take ten days for an excursion into the big country — we "haven't time!" I wonder if that excuse seems as real, and is as foolish, to the thousands of others all over the world who are making it believingly and perhaps a little wistfully.

Now we are possessed of two good legs apiece; a saddle horse each; and a pack mule between us. With these advantages over our friends the sugar pines we can accomplish much. We can ramble out on tours of discovery. The objects of these discoveries may be new pools in the creek, new birds' nests under the ferns, new knowledge of the intimate twists and turns, the glens and glades and hollows, the peaks and vistas of our own pine-clad range;—or they may be, as once this summer, the finding, away back among the chaos of the snow peaks, in the awful gorge of a box cañon thousands of feet deep, some wide pine flat with a brook bubbling through, and a natural pasture in a pocket of the ledges, and pools across which no angler's fly had ever fallen, and from which the big trout leaped in countless numbers. From here to the top of our knoll is a half-mile swarming with interesting doodlebugs, birds, and plants: the Sierras are eighty miles or so wide, five hundred long, and, except on the edges, uninhabited, wild, tremendous. In these two facts rest all the possibilities.

Of course we know our own range intimately — all its water-courses, plateaus, ravines, cañons, peaks, and hidden meadows. It is about seven or eight miles long— before it merges into Shuteye — and probably two broad. The forest is magnificent and almost unbroken. Whiskey Creek runs nearly its length, on a wide sloping shelf below the highest ridge. From it are tributaries, short, tortuous, rapid. From this fact, and the impossibility of gaining a bird's-eye view over the forest growth, it is exceedingly difficult at first to get the lay of the country. Under the trees a ridge-top will coax you insensibly farther and farther around to the south or west until at last you emerge at a most unexpected point. A man considerably practised in mental visualisation of topographical features will soon get the logic of it all. One not so accustomed, however, would wander far out of his way. He would never get lost, in the sense that somebody would have to undertake his recovery; but he would be considerably—well, delayed.

There are about a dozen major meadows on the Ridge, all exceedingly beautiful save the one where the little mill stands. Besides these, are innumerable "stringers" and tiny pockets of rich feed where the range cattle and the deer can stand knee-deep in bliss. There are bold granite ridges, and unbroken rock sheets covering many acres, and little stunted trees growing low and twisted. There are wide hillsides warm in the sun, covered with snow brush and manzañita and chinquapin. There are thickets of young pines and the depths of willows. There are broad forests and shady dells; waterfalls, rapids, deep still pools, glades where the fairies must dance every moonlight night. All the wonder and variety of the woodland and the peaks are here. And every once in a while you come upon a sheltered, shaded, intimate nook, screened with dogwood, carpeted with moss, flecked with sunlight, musical with birds, watered by a tiny thread of a streamlet, murmurous with buzzing insects, where you can forget, if that pleases you, all the grandeurs and the solitudes.

Of course we learned all these things gradually. No single and determined exploration could do more than establish the shortest routes between various points. That is something. When we first came to the Ridge, and before we had any notion of settling down here, we rode idly, for the moment's pleasure, without much attention at direction, until it was time to return to camp. On one such excursion we emerged from the woods into a gem of a round meadow encompassed by a rim fifty feet or so high. We rode up over the rim and home again. That meadow was then only one of the hundreds we had seen in these mountains, and speedily it blurred to a memory of a beautiful thing detached from all practical details of location. Later, after we had built the Cabin and settled down, the picture of that green cup returned to us. In our rides and walks we constantly expected once more to emerge on the steep perfect semicircle of the rim, to look down again on the peaceful, still emerald sward. Our expectations were vain. One after the other we canvassed the meadow possibilities, so to speak. For the formation of these mountain meadows depends on certain well-defined conditions. Knowing those conditions you know where to look for a meadow. We found many, but never the one. Gradually the idea of it fell into the background. We remembered it as one remembers the features of a dream, or of some natural object seen in earliest childhood, when such matters are isolated, before they have fallen into an orderly sequence of memory. The picture was distinct but utterly detached. And so after a time it lost its physical reality. The Lost Meadow was something to be dreamed about—and doubted.

Then one day when I was thinking about something else—in fact I was most busily searching for a section corner placed nearly thirty-five years ago—I rounded a corner of a knoll — and there lay Lost Meadow, peaceful in the sunshine. One could have ridden within a hundred feet of it without seeing it. Perhaps we had done so. It was as beautiful as I remembered it; and yet I confess to being deeply chagrined. What is a real meadow compared to the dream of one inaccessible? Who would barter the last touch of mystery for a lost reality? What do you suppose the Round Table would have done with the Grail if it had gained it?

On that point Billy and I once had something of an argument. I always maintain that in a landscape there should be left one unexplored vista, preferably over a hill. I want one direction preserved for imagination. If you know what is over all the hills, then where are you going to pasture the flocks of your fancy? In any well-ordered imagination are glades, forests, meadows, and flowers, birds and solemn trees, which are the enchanted land. Some people build castles there. Personally I do not care for castles. They are more fitted to Spanish landscapes; and then, too, they generally hurt like the mischief when they come tumbling about your ears. The enchanted land may be located almost anywhere — tobacco smoke, wood coals, white clouds will do — but there is a substantial advantage in locating it somewhere handy, like over a hill. Even the best imagination finds difficulty in transporting its owner vividly enough to a cloud or into a wood fire. But any of us can wander in fancy up through the trees, over the always fascinating skyline, and plump into the enchanted land.

If, however, you happen to have been *in propria persona* over that hill you know the country is already occupied by various more or less interesting things. Two bodies cannot occupy the same space at the same time. Your enchanted land is crowded out. Therefore I repeat, firmly, in every landscape should be preserved one vista which you do not explore.

At the Cabin I picked out such a vista. There are two admirably adapted to the purpose, and I hesitated for some time.

Directly down in front of the Cabin stretches the meadow terminated by aspens and by the green pine forest. During the daytime that forest looks unbroken; but when twilight falls, the planes differentiate themselves. Greens near at hand are dark, those farther away retain still a faint illumination. Thus we can see down through an unsuspected forest aisle to a distant and fairy hillside. When the sun has set, this becomes a light olive-grey in delicate contrast to the dark olive-greens nearer at hand. The effect is quite magical and charming—a whole mountain-side evoked by the evening.

And, again in view from the front verandah of the Cabin, but to the left, rises a long gentle slope set with the wonderful straight columns of sugar pines. By chance they grow here in such a manner as to leave an unobstructed aisle leading straight up the hill. The effect of dwindling distance is helped by the accident of a false perspective—the rows of trees grow into a slight convergence. At the very top of the hill a low and delicate screen of brush has been thrown across to close the vista, like the screen of a theatre around which dancers are to appear. The aisle invited one to the spacious strolls of kings. Around the screen of brush lay the magic country.

I decided finally on this latter. The other required wings wherewith to fly to the fragile distant hillside. Here I could wander idly, each step apparent through the smoke of my after-dinner pipe, up between the columns of the portico to the green screen—and there I was, at home with all the ragtags and bobtails of many desired lands and places!

This lasted a month. Then the expected happened.

"Let's explore up over the hill to-morrow," Billy suggested.

I explained carefully why not. It was evening, and the half-light threw mystery down through the long straight aisle. Only, by some freak of opening, the brush screen at the end caught a last shaft of light. It stood out faint green in a species of translucence. As though to emphasise my remarks, at this moment a deer stepped out from the shadow, stood for a moment before the screen as though appearing on a stage, and faded away into the shadow again.

"Oh!" cried Billy softly.

"You see!" said I.

But Billy could not see that deer at all as a guardian spirit of the enchanted land. Her argument was that not even an enchanted land could be as wonderful as the realities of these, our Sierras: that enchanted lands could be easily moved to localities not otherwise desirable, and that therefore it was a shame to deprive ourselves of any possibilities. It ended by our walking up through the aisles of the trees. Of course!

Over the brow of the hill lay a little oval of a meadow approached by solemn and austere ranks of trees. The sun shone cheerfully on the grass: the deep shadows were in the woods. Owing to various willows and the like one could not see into the meadow until directly opposite.

"This," said Billy decisively, "is a Glade. I've read of them, but I never saw one before."

We went on. A little farther was a rounded amphitheatre of a smooth, unbroken, concave, semicircular hill. It would have seated twenty thousand people, or the entire population of the fairies. In the centre of it a dozen big sugar-pines were giving a masque. They stopped as we came along, and waited aloofly until we had gone by. The audience of big trees and little trees also suspended their attention. We hurried on feeling rather guilty at having interrupted.

Over the rim of the amphitheatre we came on two old gentlemen with their heads together. They were evidently myrmidons, for only their heads were above the soil. The heroes were gigantic in the old days: the round helmet tops of the old gentlemen were quite ten feet above the ground. They held very still as we went by; and when we looked back they resembled two huge round boulders, close together, all alone in the brown soil of the forest.

A little farther we found a cave in the base of a huge sugar-pine. The entrance was low, but once inside there was room for us both, and for the dogs. Its bed was dry and soft. It ran up into dimness, like a chimney. We waited some time for the dryad to return; but as she did not, we finally had to leave without seeing her.

In all directions were pogsnoggle holes. What are pogsnoggles, and of what appearance are their holes? If ever you find a hole that looks as though it had been made by thrusting a round cane straight into soft earth; or if ever under an uprooted tree-root you come upon a huge, jagged, crooked opening: and if, moreover, *there are no tracks* about these holes—then be sure you have come upon the abode of the wily pogsnoggle, male and female. For the sexes live in different kinds of holes, and make no tracks. I have never seen a pogsnoggle, but I always look hopefully upon their holes.

And then, after a time, we came upon a meadow, one of the prettiest of all, large, willow-grown, with a stream, big trees, hills, with green grass and flowers and birds. That is as far as we had time for that day.

"There," said Billy, as we turned homeward, "can your enchanted land beat that?"

I am not sure. At any rate my last unexplored vista is gone. For rent cheap, one unlocated homeless and friendless enchanted land.

XVI

THE BIG COUNTRY

Sooner or later we get restless. Then one morning we throw "the diamond" over the modest pack that suffices us, and are off for the Big Country. Sometimes we carry grub for a month, and are back again inside the week: again we go for a week and are absent several. It all depends.

The Big Country is very big indeed. Three hours from our Cabin we top Shut-eye Pass and can look abroad over a few hundred square miles of it. From Mt. Lyell on the north, down the sweep of the Minarets, past the Mono Creek divide to Goddard, lying dim at the south, the ordered procession of splintered granite giants capped with eternal snow files by us across the distance. They are blue and airy, and between us and them lie deep cañons, wide forests, lower ranges, domes, buttes and rivers, yet they are not the top o' the world, but only the outlying rampart. Beyond them still is the Main Crest. And when you fish out your map, you find you are gazing upon but a portion of one quadrangle, and there are many quadrangles.

Here, from Shuteye, is the one chance to see the watershed of the Joaquin in general. Hereafter the traveller is involved in smaller problems—the mazes and labyrinths of woods and mountains, the expedience of trails, the grandeurs of granite and snow. Only occasionally will the giants among which he moves permit him a wide outlook, and then only in certain directions.

Through the Big Country Billy and I have ridden many times in the course of many seasons, yet we are far from knowing it well. Each year we find new meadows, new camps, new fishing, even new mountains. And when we pass on over the ranges to the Merced and Tuolumne water-

The Big Country.

shed on the north or the King's and Kaweah on the south, there opens before us an inexhaustible, beautiful wonderland. In all sorts of company we have ridden. Last year I was out six weeks quite alone, and in that time held mainly to the snow altitudes. Again we started once in a company of sixteen with twenty-nine animals. These people were Rangers and their wives: each group of two or three had its own outfit and did its own cooking: so we journeyed along as independently as though alone, and as merrily as a troupe of minstrels. At the end of a day or so duties began to reduce our number, until at last our own people alone remained, pushing on to a high-up lake where live big trout.

Throughout each and every trip one has adventures. An adventure in the mountains means anything out of the ordinary—often a discomfort turned inside out. Our Supervisor came in one day to tell us how his horse had fallen in a ford, his supplies and clothes wet through; and in addition it came dark and he had to curl up under a tree until morning.

"But that was an adventure, wasn't it?" he cried buoyantly.

Miss Bailey, too, reported her adventure. Being possessed of an ambition for Indian baskets, she rode down the mountain to a rancheria, but, returning, got lost in the brush.

"I'd always heard," said she, "that if you gave your horse his head, he would always take you home. I did so. He walked up to a tree, tucked up one hind leg, and went to sleep. It took me until dark to find the trail, the sun was hot, and I got all scratched up. But it was quite an adventure, wasn't it?"

No one can guess what the day may bring forth. You have fully made up your mind to go to the Devil's Post Pile. But after breakfast, when you go out to look for the horses, they have disappeared. The bell is nowhere audible. A wide circle discovers their tracks. These lead straight up the mountain. The stones and dirt are scattered, and the position of the hoof-marks indicates that the animals were on the keen jump.

"Stampeded," you remark to yourself, and set about looking for the cause. At the spring is the footprint of a bear. You gaze at it with disgust.

"If you were a big one, I shouldn't mind," you soliloquise, "but you weren't much bigger than Brudder Bones!"

All that day you track horses. Sometimes the trail is as easy to follow as a path. Again you have to use all your skill to spy out the marks of iron on granite. It becomes a game, and an interesting one. When finally you come on the truants standing asleep in some little green stringer, you are quite pleased with yourself, in a way, although you are perfectly well aware that trailing three or four horses anywhere is a very mild feat. Still, it is an adventure.

Because of adventures it is exceedingly difficult to travel on any sort of schedule. You never can tell what is going to happen to modify your well-laid plans. An unexpected depth and softness of snow or an unexpected volume of water may spell long delay. An inch on the map means nothing but uncertainty—an hour or a week indifferently. It took me nine days to go ten miles once.

But all this is fine camp-fire material. When a party of experienced mountain travellers is thus collected, some interesting yarns can be gathered. Adventures are almost always funny as you look back on them, or at least they are strongly leavened by the humorous element. We once went camping with a mighty jolly college professor and his wife. Of course we had our good reliable outfit of animals; but, as naturally, they had to pick up what they could get. Their pack-horse was named Snowball, was white, gaunt, independent, and obstinate. If we all went one side around an obstruction, he generally showed the freedom of his judgment by going the other. He followed all right, but liked to choose his own route.

That was all very well as long as we were in a forest country where the going was good.

But when we climbed above snowline the case was different. In that sort of travel the leader picks the best way—sometimes it is the only way—and the others tread pretty closely in his footsteps. We told this to Snowball, and predicted trouble: but that ancient animal, with bucolic obstinacy, knew better. Finally the expected happened. We came to a brook running under a snow-field. Naturally this formed snow bridges, more or less strong; and obviously the proper way to cross that brook was through an opening, and *not* over a snow bridge. Snowball thought otherwise. The rotten snow caved through. Snowball plunged, heaved, finally turned upside down. We arrived to find his nose and four hoofs visible.

This was bad enough, but all at once it occurred to our friends that not only was the pack upside down, but in the stream! The girls raced to the lower end of that snow tunnel. Just in time! They rescued a potato bobbing gaily in the swift current.

So while the Professor and I dug out

that fool horse, and got him to his feet and out of that hole, the two girls stationed themselves either side the stream, like cats watching a mouse-hole, waiting for things to come out the orifice of that black tunnel. Every moment or so one would scream in triumph or dismay. Potatoes, onions, provision bags, clothes, even a pot or so—everything but bedding, and that could not get away—shot forth, was captured, and joined its disconsolate companions on the rocks. It did not seem funny at the time.

One summer, when I was out alone, I made a long ride down into the mile-deep cup of Hite's Cove, out again over the steep ridge, and so into the cañon of the Merced. There, to my consternation, I discovered that the new railroad into Yosemite had been laid directly over the old trail, and that no new one had been constructed. The right of way was the only route. To the one side was a drop-off of from ten to thirty feet into the torrential river; on the other, unscalable cliffs. It was fully three miles up the cañon before the trail turned off to climb the cañon walls. The situation was not appealing, if one met a train—or was overtaken by one—for the curves were so numerous and so sharp that there would be no chance for "down brakes."

I sat down and cogitated for some time. Then a bright idea struck me. I waited patiently until a train passed going up. Then I followed it as fast as I could travel. I argued that in three miles that train would not be likely either to turn around and come back or to pass another.

It was a bright idea all right. Only at about the mile-and-a-half point I came around the corner on a track inspector's car coming my way. It was a gasoline car, without a muffler, and sported a bright yellow canopy top!

Everybody's movements were guided by instinctive reactions, for nobody had time to think. The track inspector stopped. I hadn't time to get off, so I threw myself strongly toward the cliff. The two animals just flew out into space. They were so terror-stricken that they never even turned around, but jumped plump off the right of way and into the Merced.

I fell on a pile of stones and skinned myself up somewhat. After I had found I could still walk, I looked over the edge. The animals had lit on a shallow bar. I clambered down, and after considerable manœuvring got them back to the tracks—the gasoline car, at my earnest request, had gone on. In ten minutes more we turned off to the ascending trail. A slight twist of Flapjack's forefoot—from which he soon recovered—and a "busted-up" right hand for myself comprised the list of casualties. For five weeks the latter bothered me enough to call out some ingenuity in camp work and packing. This was not especially funny at the time. Yet can you imagine a situation more inherently comic? In the depths of the wildest country in California, two mountain-bred animals confronted without warning by a gasoline car with a yellow top!

Another time I was working my way up through a pass filled with snow. The month was August, but the precipitation had been unusual the winter before, and the zigzag trail was quite buried. Only occasionally did eight or ten feet of it show where a bare patch had melted. As the slope was very steep, it was impossible to walk the animals out over the snow. Therefore I was engaged busily in chopping footholds, in kicking shale into a species of solidity, and generally working like a beaver after the manner of one "getting through the country." In this way we reached nearly to the saddle of the pass. To go through the gap we had to skirt the upper edge of a living glacier just over sixteen hundred feet in height. I would leave Demi and Flapjack standing while I made trail. After I had accomplished forty or fifty feet of it, I would lead them along.

Flapjack is the most sensible mule I have ever owned or had anything to do with. He possesses many characteristics I should like to point out to the instinct-only school of naturalists—such as a genuine love of scenery, a dog's faithfulness, and innumerable instances where he has worked out original problems by means of at least an extraordinary imitation of mental processes. But in the present instance he made a mistake. Becoming bored with our slow progress—Flapjack is easily bored, like most intelligent people—he wandered out on the snow-field. *Zip!* each hoof skated in a different direction! Flapjack began to slide on his belly, head on. It was exactly like coasting—the same increasing descent, the same momently accelerating speed—and a slope of sixteen hundred feet on which to gather momentum! There was nothing to do. I stood erect and waved my hat at that rapidly disappearing black mule.

"Good-bye, Flap!" I shouted.

Then I began to adjust my ideas to the thought of climbing all that weary way down again. I was alone, and days in from civilisation. It would be necessary to collect from the ruined pack what I could carry comfortably on my saddle-horse. The bulk of the pack, the mule, and his outfit were, of course, a total loss. All these considerations came into my mind, were appraised and adjusted while poor old Flapjack was sliding over the shoulder of the glacier before the last steep plunge. Then I saw him stop with a jerk that seemed almost to snap his head off and hang motionless, a little black speck on the whiteness. Snatching my riata from the saddle and the little safety hand-axe from the saddle-bags, I made my way as quickly as I could over the shale and along the edge of the snow-field to a point opposite where Flap had brought up. Then I cut footholds out; got the rope around Flap's neck; returned to the shale; took a turn around a projecting and solid boulder, and started up the mule. At the end of the rope he partly scrambled, partly slid in a semicircle to the comparative safety of the shale. Then I took a look to see what had stopped him.

It was a small triangular rock projecting above the surface of the snow. I looked carefully, but as near as I could see it was the only rock on the half-mile expanse of the glacier. Furthermore, it would have been too small to have stopped the mule if he had not hit it accurately. The least preponderance of weight either side would have swung him around it. After that adventure Flap attended strictly to business and did not attempt any more independent excursions unless he knew exactly what he was about.

Sometimes the adventure is of daily occurrence, but it does not cease being an adventure for all that. Of this class was Old Slippery.

Old Slippery was an eiderdown quilt belonging to a girl. It was light as feathers and silk could be; it was very warm; and — the owner assured us — unexcelled for making a comfortable bed. But I had to pack Old Slippery. That was my little daily adventure.

For not only did Old Slippery earn its

name from obvious characteristics, but it was as delicate as an unboiled Easter-egg. The silk cover was as easily punctured as a soap bubble. The least projection among the constituents of the pack, the smallest twig, the gentlest accidental scrape against a rock, was sufficient to gouge a neat triangular hole. Through that hole floated gently clouds of eiderdown. In that quilt were magicked some five hundred cubic yards of down. I know: for we lost out at least three hundred, and the comforter was still plump and soft.

Having surrounded Old Slippery with all loving care and soft things, it became necessary to tuck in the top canvas in such manner as to protect the quilt against the accidents and incidents of a day's journey. This took time and thought and profanity and stuffing in. Finally we would throw the hitch. Then a corner of Old Slippery would be discovered sticking out just where the first sapling would catch it. We stuffed that in. Promptly Old Slippery burst forth at another place. After ten minutes of this the playful old thing would decide to be good, and we would make our start for the day.

At first one always gets the impression that the start for the day is made only after a good hard day's work is done. So many things have happened! You have arisen and washed and dressed—no light feat, with the thermometer well below freezing and the meadow white with frost. Then there is breakfast to cook and eat, the dishes to wash, the utensils and food to stow away, the beds to be folded, all the camp to be packed for travel. The horses must be caught, unhobbled—frosty buckles and straps—led a greater or lesser distance to camp, saddled, finally packed. You put out your camp-fire at last with the feeling that it is lucky you do not belong to the union or your time would be nearly up. As a matter of fact it is more the multiplicity than the duration that has impressed you. By getting up at five I can, when alone, be under way by half-past six. A larger and more complex party will take from two to three hours.

Then begins the day's journey in the freshness of the morning. The air is crisp; the birds are all singing; the dash of the stream and the oversong of the trees are in your ears, the dazzle of snow and granite in your eyes. The world is very good. You attack the problems of routes, trails, difficulties of the way, with enthusiasm.

Time slips away on wings for five or six hours. Then somehow the animals begin to be irritating. A certain pack-horse named Bingo irritates you strangely by his habit of walking a few steps from the trail to crop greedily until the very latest moment. Your saddle is getting hard, and shifting does little good. If you are not quite certain of your route, you grow impatient over that fact. You are not tired, of course, but you are apt to be a little cross and brooding.

Then quite unexpectedly a patch of green shows to right or left. You ride down pessimistically. Yes, there is good water after all. It will do. The saddles and packs are thrown off, the horses hobbled and turned loose to graze. Everything is in a most discouraging mess.

Still, you tell yourself, doggedness does it. One at a time you overcome such simple tasks as collecting firewood, carrying the canvas bucket full of water, searching out the grub bags, slicing the meat. The crackle of the fire and the bubble of water cheer you somewhat. You get up energy enough for a wash.

A half-hour later you are drawing at your pipe with a comfortable sense of repletion beneath a loosened belt. This is a bully place to camp; couldn't be beat. Running water, fine horse-feed, heaps of firewood, and level places for beds. And just look at the scenery! Where'd you beat that? Guess

I'll make me a fir bed, and try for trout awhile. Horses seem to be enjoying it. That Bingo is in good shape: he knows how to take care of himself—gets pretty near a full meal every day along the trail!

XVII

TROUT

The Eastern trout fisherman is likely to receive a shock when first he angles in the Big Country.

He is probably accustomed to streams wherein every pool, every riffle, every hole, if not easily accessible, is at least possible. Probably he is used to wading his brooks. At any rate he would consider himself most neglectful and slipshod were he to pass over even a single bit of water where a trout might lurk. If occasionally the chance of thicket or of steep bank secludes a pool from his first attention, he is certain eventually, by the exercise of ingenuity, to drop a fly in that protected spot.

Also our Eastern brook-fishing is apt to be a leisurely affair. We drop gently down the stream, flicking our flies to right or left, pausing often to whip out thoroughly some especially inviting pool. Once in a while we have to break through a little thick brush or clamber up a steep bank. Then we pant heavily and think it pretty hard going, until we get back again to our amphibious environment. Nor is the case of the hill fishing much different. There is more scrambling to do, and perhaps a trifle more brush. But the progress is always pleasantly and steadily downhill, and never is one separated far from the beloved stream.

When our gentle angler comes West, however, the whole logic of the game is changed. Looking down from above on one of the swift torrential mountain streams, his heart is filled with joy. One after another the deep green bubble-shot pools receive the cascades and falls of white water; long dark cliff-hung stretches hint of the big fellows; hundreds of yards of fluted riffles swirling about boulders tell of the smaller fry. He scrambles eagerly down to the stream's edge. The casting is all that could be desired; he gets a strike almost at the first drop of the fly. Three fine fish reward him. Full of pleasant anticipations, he prepares then to move down to the next pool below. He cannot. At this point his troubles begin.

For, coincidentally, at this point the cliffs rise sheer on either side. The next pool is just around the corner—but the corner is fifty or sixty feet high. Our angler looks up in despair.

"Have I got to climb over that thing?" he demands fiercely.

A universal silence seems to give assent. He clambers and clings and slides, over and down—the pool lies below him, but quite out of reach except, perhaps, by means of a rope. From above he can see the big trout rising and falling slowly as is the habit of the mountain fish in the deep clear pools. After a dozen futile attempts, he gives it up. And in the course of the next mile he gets at that fascinating, desirable, irritating stream but three or four times. Also he has climbed and scrambled and scratched himself to a state of panting exhaustion.

Now everybody knows that the ethics and canons of sportsmen are as the laws of the Medes. Nothing more ironclad can be imagined. Not only is it unsportsmanlike to do things contrary to the way you have been brought up to do them; but it is no fun! Similarly, automatics and pump guns and mechanical fish-hooks and salt logs and jacking and other atrocities of the kind would give a true sportsman no pleasure at all. These are matters of ethics. But then there are also matters of habit. A thing may be quite proper and yet be irritating in conception and execution because it runs contrary to the way we have always done things. It all depends on training, of course. Some people quite sincerely consider bait for trout unsportsmanlike. If they cannot catch with a fly, they will not catch at all. Personally I prefer fly-fishing above all others, and would never use any other method if the fish are rising even occasionally: but if it is a case of "wums or nothing" with them, I am not the man to deny a worthy trout anything in reason.

This is just the case of our Eastern angler. It irritates him horribly to leave all those excellent pools unfished. They haunt him. Regret fills his heart. He is thoroughly unhappy about them, and is oppressed with a genuine feeling of guilt at having done the thing incompletely. So much of sport is the thoroughness and smartness with which we do things! By night all his sacred traditions are shattered. He comes to the conclusion that mountain fishing is rather poor, very hard work, and not much fun.

Of course, after a time he changes his mind. He comes to realise the limitations of the human frame as opposed to large, abrasive, and immovable mountains. When this idea has quite penetrated, it forces out the other Eastern-bred notion: he comes to see that the fishable pools are in the minority. As a next step, he learns to ignore the inaccessibles, and to look with practised eye for those places vouchsafed him by the kindness of the Red Gods. He fishes a pool, and walks quite cheerfully by a dozen to fish another.

It is a very simple bit of practical philosophy to acquire. Yet you who are anglers will understand. All the old traditions soaked in with the splashing sunlight, the gurgling cold water, the twilight shadows of a thousand days of a hundred Eastern streams have had to be eradicated. The sacredness of What-has-always-been has had to give way. Conservatism and radicalism; institutions and new ideas; progress and content—why, if the list were only continued a little we would find ourselves in essence face to face with all the old antagonisms of our race! When our Easterner begins to love the mountain fishing, he has undergone more than a change of ideas in regard to trout pools. It would be curious to follow him back to his home, to see his old accustomed affairs as he will see them now.

As he looks back on that first day's sport, he laughs at himself. He sees now that, while he did not fish half the pools, he caught twice the fish, of greater weight, and as high a degree of gameness as he was accustomed to in his old haunts. In addition he will remember the crisp mountain air, the great hillsides, the chaos of granite over which the white water boiled, the giants with their snow capes about their mighty shoulders calm against the heaven—that sky of the unbelievable deep clear blue peculiar to the high altitudes, a uniform colour from zenith to horizon. Then he is in a fair way to become an enthusiast.

For one thing, he learns not to be in so much of a hurry to move on after he has struggled to his pool. More likely now he will light a pipe and straddle a boulder, and cast again and again over the creaming or darkling waters. Every once in a while one of the inhabitants will rise to his lure. He confesses to a growing astonishment at the number of these.

I remember one hole where for two weeks I fished every afternoon. A big yellow pine had fallen out into the stream, and the eddy had scooped a deep hollow in the sands beneath. The swift current boiled up from under it. Thirty feet or so downstream was a sandbar on which one could stand ankle-deep. Beginning at the shoreward end of that log, I would cast foot by foot until I touched the swirl around its tip. By that time I had caught my two dozen. There were three of us in the party, and we could eat two dozen a day. Throughout the entire period of our stay, except for occasional curiosity, I never fished anywhere else. I suppose each day new fish took the places of those that had been caught. At any rate, the supply seemed inexhaustible: the last two dozen came as rapidly as the first. Often I have sat on a boulder, casting occasionally to see if they were ready to take hold, while more restless companions would search always on and on for pools where they were biting. For a long time I would catch nothing: then they would begin to strike. By dark I would have as many as the rest.

But I must confess that the fascination of wandering is more often in the ascendant. It is fun to scramble over points, to slide down rock shutes, to wade gingerly along submerged ledges, to give your whole soul to getting from this point to that—with always the possibility of the Big One, of course. In that manner one is more apt to have adventures than if one should sit still. I have encountered bears on the same errand as myself. Sometimes by the edge of the water one comes upon a red mineral stain, and a tiny fountain welling up through a round hole in the rock. The rubber cup then dips up a drink of the most delicious sparkling soda water. The quaint water ouzel flits up and down the stream. If you are in great luck, you may see her walk calmly down below the surface of the current. How she maintains herself against it, I am unable to guess. In the meantime the little ouzels squawk and cheep like a lot of baby robins in anticipation of a meal. Sometimes the hillsides rise through the pines in a long even slope. Sometimes they jump in rock ledges. Again you feel yourself an atom in the twilight inferno of a deep gorge through which the river runs hollowly. You slip and stumble over boulders: you manœuvre your rod through thickets: you walk gingerly over long smooth fields of unbroken rock: you wander at ease over tiny meadows, broad bars, where the footing is solid and the casting easy.

But the casting is always that, once you have gained a casting position. The spring freshets see to it that your back cast has room.

And always, at any moment, you may

look up to the serenity of great mountains and flawless skies. They, and the joys of exploration, would be enough even without the trout.

But the trout are good, exceedingly so. As in most streams, they run big and little. The average mountain rainbow, the fellow you expect generally when you cast into a likely-looking pool, runs from eight to fifteen inches, and is game for his weight. The fingerlings do not bother one much, for some reason. Big trout frequent certain localities.

I shall never forget one place. It was about nine thousand feet up, in a cup of granite perhaps three or four miles across, and circled on three sides by very tall mountains. In the cup was a lake fringed by a narrow band of lodgepole pine and willow. A tumbling, brawling stream fell from the snows into the upper end of the lake. At the lower end it stole quietly out through beautiful open poplar woods for a quarter-mile. Then it fell and leaped and tumbled away down the mountain.

The poplar woods were open, as I have said, and flecked with warm sunlight, and full of birds. The river flowed quietly, its surface almost glassy in its reflections of the checker of very blue sky and of translucent green leaves. Yet when I looked closely I could see the waving marks of a strong current and eddy sweeping on, like the almost invisible swirls in a thick green glass. Through them the bottom wavered and trembled slightly, and so I appreciated the volume of water flowing through this quiet glade.

The light undergrowth grew to the edge of the bank, and the bank itself was chopped off square and steep only a foot or so above the water. In some places it was deeply undermined, the top held together by interlaced roots. Trees leaned perilously. Some had even yielded, and, falling into the current, had been swept at a long angle with the stream's bed, there to form mysterious holes and shadows.

I crept to the edge and looked in.

Through the green water the bottom was plainly to be seen, with all its hills and vales, its old snags, its rock, and the clean white sand. In some places it was at least twelve feet deep, and nowhere less than four or five. Yet every inch of it was visible, as plainly as though in the air, save for that translucent green and the delicate waving swirls like the shadows in thick green glass.

Trout lay singly, in twos and threes. Some were close to the bottom in plain sight, their gill-covers moving slowly. Others could be made out dimly as shadows in the shadows. All were big. There were no little ones at all. From where I stood—and I could see only a hundred feet or so of the stream—I counted twenty-odd. Judging by the samples I caught later, not one weighed less than three pounds. As for the largest, I'm not foolish enough even to guess at him.

I was not out to fish that afternoon, but I made a hurried round trip to camp and back to that aquarium. Then, concealed in the brush, I began to manipulate my flies.

You fishermen all know how hopeless it seems when you can actually disapprove of your fish in plain view. You cast seductively in front of the biggest in sight. He pays absolutely no attention whatever to your efforts. Finally when you annoy him enough, he fades away. Or else he merely opens and shuts his gills three or four times. After you have cast your arm lame some little fellow rushes madly out from somewhere and seizes your fly. He turns that pool upside down before you succeed in landing him. When the bubbles cease, there is the big one communing wisely with himself on the vanity of human endeavour.

There is one way, however, and that lies through the gates of patience. Of course, if your fish has seen you, then you might as well pack up and move on. But if he is unaware of your existence, and you will cast and cast and cast, and rest, and then cast some more, perseveringly and accurately and skilfully, why, sooner or later that big fish is going to become annoyed.

"Great guns!" he will remark to himself; "that red and white thing's a nuisance! It disturbs my meditations."

Mightily, almost lazily he will rise; turn slightly; take your fly gently in his mouth; and, still with dignified deliberation, turn to depart with it. Then is your cue to strike—if you can swallow your heart in time.

I fished cautiously all the afternoon. It would be rash even to guess at the number of enormous trout inhabiting that quarter-mile of stream. They were not rising. Not one in a hundred even knew my fly was skittering across the water; or, if he did know, he did not care. But then, big fish are never "rising" in the sense that smaller fish rise—hungrily, eagerly, in a rush. Otherwise there would be no more big fish, for they would all be caught out. Yet, by keeping at it, I landed four. They were about of a size. I had no scales, but they were from a half-inch to three inches longer than the first joint of my saddle rod; and that is just twenty-three inches. In the stream were several fish bigger than those I caught.

I measured them, and returned them carefully to the water, for I was travelling alone, and had no use for so much fish. Then in the half-hour of good light remaining, I dropped to where the water leaped down the granite, and caught four ordinary trout for supper.

The trout hog is always a great puzzle to me. There are plenty of the species roaming around—men who catch a hundred or so fish and leave them piled in a rotting heap. If a man were confined in his fishing to just what he can eat, I could see some colour of reason—though not the slightest excuse—for such a performance. When I travel alone, two or three ordinary trout are all I can possibly get away with at a meal; and a single big one would stump me completely. That would not be much fishing for an enthusiastic angler. I could imagine a strong temptation to catch "just one more," even if the probabilities were strong that the one more would be wasted. As a matter of fact I catch just as many as I have time for—and put them back. This should be done gently, with wetted hand. Then it does not injure the fish in the least: on the contrary it furnishes him with healthful and much needed exercise. Only if he bleeds at the gills is he in distress. Then I slip him in the creel—or old flour sack, rather, in the wilderness—and add him to the larder. In this manner it is possible to enjoy a full day's sport, and to leave the stream almost as populous as when you cast your first fly over it.

By hooking your scales through the loop of your leader, you can weigh your catch. By measuring off inches on the butt of your rod, you can measure him. Then disengage him gently from the hook, slide him in the water, and wish him God-speed. He will lie quite still for a moment or so "getting his breath," as you might say. Then he will drop slowly out of sight.

I once fished for some weeks where I had an opportunity of making some interesting experiments. Two very large pools lay one above the other. I built between them a loose barrier, but sufficiently close to prevent the trout passing from one pool to the other. Whenever I caught a trout, I first nicked his hard gill-cover with a knife, then transferred him to the other pool. At last I had nearly the whole population concentrated in the upper basin. Then I began to transfer them back again, watching carefully for signs of injury. Whenever they had been handled with a damp hand, they seemed as healthy as ever. A very dry hand did no injury as long as the grasp was not too firm. But if the fine slime became rubbed from the fish's sides, it seemed to afford opportunity for parasitic or diseased growths. Some of the fish I caught as many as eight times apiece. Generally they would rise as eagerly as ever the day after being played to a finish. About fifteen or sixteen hours was the shortest interval.

My own practice in fishing alone is

exactly the reverse of accepted fishermen's doctrine: I put back all the big ones, and keep the little six or seven inch fellows. The latter are better eating, and the lone fisherman can do more in the way of numbers. Of course, if one is out with a party of friends, he likes to lug in Leviathan and brag thereon, and do a little exhibiting with pride. That is half the fun. But then, Leviathan goes pretty well fried in sections, or broiled, or as basis for a fine old-fashioned "mulligan."

Trout-fishing here varies as the mountains vary. I would not have you understand that the foregoing descriptions tell it all; only the typical, what you are most likely to find.

There are streams that flow for miles through wide alpine meadows, where you can walk along the sod and cast off the bank. There are other streams deep and wide, that resemble our Eastern rivers. There are astonishing little trickles you can straddle, and from which you must fill your water bucket with a cup; and in their pools are twelve or fifteen inch fish. I do not yet quite understand how they turn around.

Californians are sometimes very fond of the lake fishing. Certainly the mountain lakes are full of trout, when they contain any at all. Toward evening the entire surface of the water, in all directions, near and far, is ringed by the slowly widening circles of fish rising. One can cast from the bank into almost any depth of water and get from one to three strikes at almost every cast. Three of us caught—and put back — one hundred and sixty-eight trout from eight to fifteen inches in about an hour and a half. Nearly two a minute!

And the supply seems inexhaustible. Certain lakes, like those at Mammoth Pass, happen to be on wagon roads. When the hot weather strikes home, the plains people come up into the hills. They rumble along in all sorts of vehicles—butcher carts, farm wagons, surreys, buggies, two-wheel carts, grocers' delivery wagons—anything that may be handy. They do not get very far, of course, but they climb up to the pines and the cooler air. They are an engaging lot, replete with babies, phonographs, farm horses, fire-arms, banjos, accordions, and Japanese lanterns. When they settle down, they are planted for the summer. Their chief delight is to go fishing.

As I said, Mammoth is accessible. Its half-dozen lakes are fished vigorously every afternoon of the season by a miscellaneous and bloodthirsty horde in waders, bare legs, canvas boots, dugouts, and impromptu rafts. Yet the fishing is notable. They bite like bulldogs, and are carried to camp by the hundreds. Possibly they naturally increase too rapidly for their own good, and this thinning out is salutary.

Sad to say, as a general rule, the trout to be caught in the lakes are not particularly attractive to the experienced angler. They sometimes run very big—as high as seven or eight pounds. But they are born tired. Two or three flops fulfil all fish conventions as to objecting. Then in they come like so many suckers. Also, their flesh is not so hard and sweet as that of their hard-fighting brethren of the streams. They make a very good amusement for the plains campers who want *fish,* and lots of 'em. Providence must have invented them for that express purpose.

Of course this rule has exceptions—everything has exceptions when it is a question of fish and fishing. There are cold-water lakes with big outlets where the fish are game and hard. The lake trout caught in such places as Convict Lake, Tahoe, and Klamath are said to be fine fish. You catch them with a heavily weighted trolling line, and I never did like dredging. As a general rule the real angler will find better sport in the streams. Given a boiling torrent going down a twenty-per-cent. grade, a four-pound trout, a six-ounce rod, and a thousand tons or so of rounded slippery boulders, and the most exacting sportsman should be satisfied. It is no uncommon thing to follow a big trout a half-mile downstream —when you can. When you cannot you follow him as far as you can. Then if he declines to stop, you must reluctantly lower your tip. Occasionally you can toss your rod to a companion and let him follow to his limits. In the meantime you have raced below to be ready to receive it in turn. This has been done. Billy once hooked a big trout that passed thus through four hands. That rod was passed, tossed, even thrown from crag to crag, until Billy was able to reclaim it at a stretch of slack water, and land her fish.

The best flies in this country are the Royal Coachman, the Queen of the

Waters, Brown Hackle, Montreal, Professor, and Rube Wood, about in the order named. Furthermore, these are unsophisticated fish, and they do not give a hang for delicate gradations of hue. If they will not rise to any of the above, they will not rise at all. I should never carry any others were I to outfit my fly-book especially for this country. This, in view of the many varieties affected by the Eastern fisherman, sounds like piscatorial heresy; but I believe it to be a fact. Indeed, as a strictly practical matter, one might go even further. Tie in a Royal Coachman and a Brown Hackle. If you cannot catch them on one or the other of those two flies, the chances are strong that the trout are not hungry enough to rise *in paying numbers* to any of the others.

For I hope I have not unintentionally conveyed the idea that fishing is always good. That is no more true here than it was in the Garden of Eden. A virgin stream is sometimes very poor fishing indeed. For long stretches the conditions of the water will be such that the pickings will be very slim. "One once in a great while" happens here as elsewhere. And probably here more than elsewhere, the fishing hours are apt to be restricted. A great many streams are fishable in full sunlight, but often the trout will rarely rise except in shadow—and there are never friendly clouds in a California summer sky. You must wait until the sun has dropped behind the mountain. Luckily the mountains are high. The twilight is no good at all. Just when the Eastern fisherman's experience would lead him to believe his best sport was about to commence, the game is called on account of darkness! I do not know why this is; but nine times out of ten it comes true. You might as well unjoint your rod and get back to camp while you can see the way comfortably.

But when they do rise, they are wonderful! There are no dull moments. And here as in the East all the blanks are forgotten. Fisherman's luck! Here's the best of it to you!

XVIII

FLAPJACK

Flapjack, as you may have gathered, is a mule. But in order to get a good notion of him you must try to imagine a pretty mule. That is of course difficult; but it must be done.

For Flapjack is of jet and shiny black, save when he is cold. Then his fur ruffles up and he resembles a plush-covered mule with very dark shadows where the nap runs the wrong way. He is small—not over thirteen-two—and is built like a deer, with clean slender legs, a straight back, deep shoulders, proud neck, and a wide forehead in which he stows his generous supply of brains. Of course, his ears are long, but they are covered with a soft black fuzz, and they are wonderfully expressive. If Flapjack is particularly pleased, they are held pointing slightly back and rigidly parallel. This also means conscious virtue. If he is contentedly walking along the trail with nothing much on his mind, those ears are hung on smooth-working ball bearings, and swing back and forth rhythmically with every step. Now it is the right ear that thus keeps time; then the left; finally the two together. *Biff!* both point instantaneously ahead, and you know Flapjack's interest has been struck. Nothing could be more inquiring or more astonished or more startled, as the case may be, than those forward ears. They snap into position almost with a click, like the cocking of a revolver.

Flapjack moves easily and lightly, and his head is always high and his eye roving. Never does he slouch along the trail half asleep. Even when he takes his earned rest, he never droops all over, as do the other animals. One feels his alertness, the perfect tension of his smooth muscles even in repose. He lifts his feet high and clean, with a little pause at the top of each step and a swift down-thrust, in the manner of wild animals not too much startled. On a rough and dangerous trail he handles each hoof separately, and knows where each is to go surely and accurately—a horse generally tries to place his front feet and lets the hind legs follow as they may. I have never seen Flapjack down but once, and that was on the slippery glacier. Never have I seen him stumble.

So much for the outer mule. All that is satisfactory, of course. When Flapjack has on his full regalia he is a proud-looking little animal. His halter, bell-collar and breasting are studded with bright knobs; his bronze bell, sweet-toned and clear, tinkles merrily; his pack rig is of black leather, lined generously with yellow sheep's wool; the kyacks are of raw hide with the hair on; the tarpaulin is khaki-coloured instead of dirty white. But the most satisfactory and remarkable thing about Flapjack is his intelligence and his disposition.

Of course he is thoroughly familiar with all the details of his business in life: if he were not, he would not be worthy of consideration. I can catch him easily, not after the fashion of a horse to which one walks as to a rooted stump, but after a manner of Flapjack's own. When I appear in the meadow with a rope in my hand, he first trots in his high-stepping way directly toward me, stops, shakes his head, runs around me in a half-circle and stops again, his nostrils expanded, his head high, showing every indication of a full intention to be a wild, bad mule. But at my first step in his direction he walks directly to me and halts. This is his almost invariable procedure.

From the moment I bring him near his pack-saddle until I unsnap his lead rope, he never moves a muscle. I can throw bags, blankets, canvases, rattling hardware, ropes, anything and everything all over, around, and at him—he will not so much as bat an eye or wave an ear. I can even drag ropes around his hind legs without his jumping forward. And, mind you, he is as full of ginger as a cookie. When the packing is pronounced completed, he nibbles about in the immediate vicinity until I mount. Then he falls dutifully in behind, and during all the rest of the day he needs no more attention to keep him with us than does my saddle-horse's own tail. Plenty of pack animals will keep in line without leading if somebody is ahead and behind them. A great many will follow the saddle-horses, provided there are no other pack-horses with whom to play truant. Flapjack will follow anyway. No matter how many animals we are driving or how much trouble they give us, Flapjack comes along. He leaves his home unhesitatingly; he leaves feed. I have ridden in the pitch dark without seeing the little mule all night, sure that daylight would disclose him teetering along close behind. These virtues—to stand well when packed, and to follow without fail—are two-thirds of a pack-horse's accomplishments.

The third is to take care of the burden, not to scrape it against trees or under limbs, to understand that extremely narrow or extremely low places are not to be attempted, to be surefooted, and not to get rattled in bad places. This virtue, or conglomerate of virtues, is more common, and Flapjack possesses it in full measure.

But Flapjack, furthermore, is gentle and friendly as a dog. He has never been struck in his life, and he does not know what it is to be afraid of those with whom he is familiar. One can pull his tail, or rub his ear, or crawl around under him for the purpose of making some adjustment with absolute confidence. When we walk through the meadow Flapjack fairly mobs us. He follows close on our heels, he nuzzles at our backs, every once in a while he circles to the front and stops us. Often on trail I have had him catch up and lay his Assyrian nose alongside my thigh. Then I would rub him between the eyes or pat his ears, and he would fall back contented.

I am about to relate an example of his desire for human company which may land me with the nature-fakers. If I were to make Flapjack symbolic of all mules, and spell his name Obrayeesee, and indulge in many capital letters, I should certainly anticipate that fate. However, I must risk it.

Flapjack, be it premised before the tale begins, looks on fences, not as physical hindrances to freedom, but as gentle hints. His masters place those easily jumped structures as a species of chalk marks to indicate the bounds beyond which they wish Flapjack would not stray. As an honourable and courteous mule, he respects those wishes. But this does not prevent his hopping out when he feels like it, for his slender legs are composed exclusively of watch springs. In justice it must be further stated that he invariably hops in again.

One afternoon Billy and I walked over to our Supervisor's, leaving two horses and the mule in the meadow. Once there, we decided to stay over night and return home the next day, a pleasant plan which we carried out. About midnight a slight shower of rain fell. On our way back, near the top of the hill, and a half-mile or so from the Supervisor's, we came on a place where a shod mule had stamped for some moments in the dirt road. Tracks of the animal walking led to this spot; tracks of the animal running led back from it. These marks had been made since the shower, and hence after midnight.

The tracks led in our direction, turned off at our trail, led to our fence, and hopped over. There was Flapjack feeding in company with the two horses. Some time after midnight—and therefore nine or ten hours after we had left home—he had become worried over us, had jumped the fence, followed our trail nearly to the Supervisor's, been seized with a panic either over being alone or at something, and returned to his friends the horses. Flapjack can follow a trail by scent. What other solution can you suggest? If we had taken the horses with us, the affair would have been very commonplace, for all members of the equine race detest solitude. But he left his customary companions to follow us up.

When I am working around the meadow I sometimes have hardly room to swing my axe or hammer. The little mule wants to smell of everything as it is constructed. When I used to do laundry near the fence, his soft black-and-grey muzzle was fairly in the tub. The other day I added a rail to the top of the fence. When Flapjack came up from the foot of the meadow he noticed the change at once, and smelled that improvement over from one end to the other. None of the horses paid any attention to it.

But though he is thus gentle and friendly, you must not get away with the idea that he is like most equine pets, spoiled, cross, lazy, pampered, and full of egotistical and selfish little tricks. No stranger can get near him. He will circle about the intruder with loud snorts of disdain.

"One thing," said California John after

a few moments' experience. "There ain't no road agent goin' to get hold of your pack, unless they shoot that mule."

So independent, free, graceful, and spirited is the little animal that he has always seemed to me less a domestic animal trained and constrained to service, as some wild creature that condescends through a great gentleness. He performs his task because he likes it. No one who has watched Flapjack on the trail could doubt it. In our local rides he always accompanies us, just as the dogs do, but without accoutrements, of course. He does not care nearly so much to go unburdened. When he finds his pack-saddle is to be used, he is delighted, and shows it plainly. Bullet, my veteran mountain horse, is the same way. At home he gets grain and hay and luxurious living and gallops on the beach. Camping he has to rustle for grass, and the labour is hard. Yet he much prefers camping. This is conclusively proved by his delight when I get out a pack-saddle. He whickers and capers around the corral, and shakes his head with joy. Not that he expects to carry the pack-saddle—that is beneath Bullet's dignity—but he knows that pack-saddles mean trips into the open.

It is a promotion to become a saddle animal. That I have observed again and again. Old Methuselah, who had been a saddle animal when he was young, used to cheer up and put on a heap of style when I would ride him over to the mill occasionally. One day I decided to break Flapjack as a saddler—he is just the right size for Billy. We saddled him up, put on a war halter, and stood by for trouble. Flapjack is not mean, but any animal will tear around a little the first time a man climbs on his back. So I swung aboard carefully. As soon as I was in the saddle Flapjack marched off, tail up, ears rigidly parallel, head aloft. He walked straight ahead until I hauled him around to a new direction: then straight ahead again. The spectators shouted with delight over his air of swollen pride. That was all the breaking Flapjack ever got—or needed.

Flapjack is fond of scenery, or at least it interests him in some way. Whenever our way leads to the brink of one of the huge box cañons, or out on a shoulder of the mountain so that one can see as over the kingdoms of the earth, Flapjack never fails to march to the farthest overhanging point. There he stands and looks, right, left, ahead, and down, for as long as we will wait for him. I do not pretend to state the basis of his interest, but the facts are as I tell you. Figure it out to suit yourself.

When we get in at night, first of all Flapjack indulges in a dusty and satisfying roll. The horses do likewise, and at once start feeding, for the day has been long, and a horse hungers even more quickly than a man.

But no matter how tired and hollow he may be, Flapjack first of all makes a complete circuit of the meadow. Then he circles it back in the woods. Having thus assured himself that nothing is going to catch him unaware, he returns and begins his meal. This trait is to me another interesting remnant of the wild-animal instinct that seems so strong in this particular mule.

In the course of the day's journey Flapjack conceives his place to be number two in the order of march. Of course his master leads, but he objects strongly even to other humans getting that coveted second place. To gain it he fights and schemes. Some poor weak-spirited pack-horses are easy. A nip, a snarl of the white teeth, a laying back of the long ears—that poor trash is shown its place. But saddle-horses are haughty animals, and their riders object to dust. Flapjack must resort to strategy. He makes long détours through the brush or trees in order to pop in when chance offers him a gap. He takes short cuts for the same purpose. When he has apparently given up the struggle and seems to be reconciled to his fate, he is nevertheless alert for the smallest chance to move up one. And when he has succeeded he snuggles into his place with so comical an air of content that his victim, if a man, generally laughs good-naturedly and concedes the point. As for another horse, I'd like to see him get the tip of a nose between Flapjack and the leading animal.

Demijohn is Flapjack's intimate friend. On the trail that haughty and bored animal leads the way for the little mule. In pasture he tells where to go and when to go there. Flapjack knows more now, in his youth, than Demijohn will ever guess at. Nevertheless, he obeys the horse blindly, and defers to him, and looks up to him, and worships him. Never but once has he disputed authority. On that occasion I saw him deliver the only two kicks he ever accomplished. Previous to the incident I had come to imagine that Flapjack had not a kick in him.

Naturally when any tidbit, such as a handful of grain, is fed the two together, they eat a moment or so in company, then Demijohn lays back his ears lazily, and Flapjack moves aside in all meekness, without objection, humbly, as a disciple from his master.

But of one thing has Flapjack proved

inordinately fond. On a great occasion we received a sack of sweet corn on the ear. It had been passed along in the kind-hearted mountain fashion, and by the time it reached us had travelled through many hands and by many methods. When we had eaten thereof with greater joy than any but those who know only the canned variety can realise, we dumped the shucks and cobs into a box and carried them out to the horses. Whiskeyjack was absent at the time, so only Demi and Flapjack were there to partake. Flapjack was delighted. This beat barley, oats, hay, carrots, sugar. And when, after a mouthful or so, Demijohn laid his ears back sulkily, and nipped at the mule as a gentle hint, Flapjack deliberately turned around and kicked him twice. The horse was so astounded that he retired down the meadow in a sulk, leaving Flapjack to finish the corn alone!

I have had some comical experiences with Flapjack. On one occasion it became necessary to cross a river flowing from a lake.

It was a deep and rather wide river, but slow. The obvious thing to do was to unpack, carry the stuff over in front of my saddle, and swim the mule unburdened. But that necessitated many trips, it was late, and I was tired. I hitched my riata around Flapjack's neck, and started in. Immediately the kyacks filled. Their weight sunk the mule. When he hit bottom I heaved. He surged up and forward, blew the water from his nostrils—and promptly sank again. Once more I heaved. We repeated the process. Thus, in long watery bounds we made the passage, poor old Flapjack alternating between the bottom and the top. Of course Demijohn swam easily enough with only my own weight atop. When we scrambled out the other bank Flapjack snorted again and again with indignation and disgust.

About once a week or so, when we are at the Cabin, we saddle up and ride to the mill for mail and supplies. Flapjack transports the latter. The trip is a staid, sober, and accustomed one. We never bother to pack very securely. But one day, on returning laden with potatoes, we found cattle near our place. Without thinking of Flapjack we set about driving them out. This necessitated fast riding through the timber; sudden stops, turns and jumps; shouts; the excited barking of the dogs; and the crashing flight of the half-wild cattle. Flapjack, left alone in the middle of the road, looked about him in vast astonishment.[1] Then all at once down went his head, up went his tail, and off he sailed, bucking at every jump. Father laughs every time he tells of that bombardment of potatoes. Here, there and everywhere he went, until the excited jangling of the little bell died in the distance. And then after a while, instead of going home, back he trotted high-stepping as usual, and lined up at our sides with an air that plainly said:

"Well, we *did* have a high old time, didn't we?"

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[1] My father was eye-witness of the performance.

I believe he thought we were all out for a grand lark, and wanted to get in the game; for he was not in the least frightened.

I have known Flapjack four years—since he was a three-year-old—and I have not a single fault to find with him nor a criticism to make of him. I do not know anybody else of whom unqualifiedly I can say that. That is why he has a chapter all to himself.

XIX

THE ETHICAL CODE OF CALIFORNIA JOHN

California John is an individual more or less travelled. He has been to various places of which perhaps you have never heard; such as Honey Lake, and Hoopa Valley, and the country of the Siskiyou. To be sure he has never visited Paris, London, or Berlin, as we have; but then, he has at least heard of them, and that is where he is ahead of us. His wanderings began in the early days when the foothill country was full of placer gold. When so minded he can tell of queer things. For instance, there is a cañon of the Chiricahuas in Arizona, happily misnamed Paradise Valley, where a gang of Mexican cattle-rustlers abode — for a while. Then the rustling abruptly ceased. Paradise Valley became a peaceful range camp, occupied but twice a year at the time of the roundups.

"And every cow-puncher there has the top part of a skull for a washbowl," says California John.

With it all he still loves the Sierras the best, and has homed to them in his approaching age. Nevertheless the single thing that impressed him most was the Grand Cañon of the Colorado.

"That place," said he to us one day, "is self-actin'! All this," he waved his hand abroad, "has to be taken care of or it gets ruined by somebody. That's what we rangers are tryin' to do. But the Grand Cañon takes care of herself." He slid from his saddle and squatted on his heels as was invariably his habit when really earnest talk was forward. "My idee is about like this," said he: "I believe the Lord made that place just for Himself. All the rest of the earth He gave to mankind. 'Go to it,' says He. 'Do what you want. Go the limit. Cut down the trees, and dam up the rivers, and paint advertising signs on and over everythin' you can stick a brush to. I ain't in favour of these proceedings: but it's up to you.' And I reckon we've done it—Injins, buffalo, pine woods, Niagara Falls—all the rest of it. But the Grand Cañon the Lord made for Himself. There ain't no water, there ain't no ways of gettin' around, there ain't no possible way of paintin' a sign you could make out with the Lick telescope. They can't dynamite it for stone, or plant parks in it, or build things in it."

"They've got a big modern hotel on the Rim now," I suggested.

"Oh, yes," he waved that lauded structure aside. "They can put up things, of course. But a full-grown World's Fair goin' full blast with the blower on you wouldn't even *see* across that Cañon. That little crack will look just the same as it does to-day a thousand years from now, when our descendants are wearin' sky-blue pants with ruffles on 'em and otherwise attractin' horrified attention from the angels."

We laughed together over this, for California John never takes his extravagances seriously. Then abruptly he became solemn.

"Son," said he, "the gold light of evening on these mountains is a mighty fine thing, but if you don't believe all I've been sayin' you ought to see the Cañon at sunset."

"I've seen it," said I.

"You remember how she changes, then, slow and solemn, like the shift of scenes in a theatre. Only there ain't no hurry about it. He don't care whether folks has to catch a train, or it's gettin' chilly out there on the Rim, or dinner is ready. And do you recollect how the peaks come out from the other Cañon wall, and draw back again, one by one? It's just as if they was answering roll-call. And all the colours in the world come out to answer roll-call too, and wait a minute, and then melt back again. The Lord has built Him a fine place; and He's fixed it so we can't never bother it. I think it's mighty good of Him to let us come and look at it."

"Why didn't you stay there," I asked, "if you like it so well?"

"It takes a mighty good man or a mighty dumb fool to live by the Cañon always. It's like sheep that way. It takes apostles or Basques to get along."

"You seem to have a pretty good streak of religion in you," I remarked in all sincerity.

"Me!" cried California John in vast astonishment. Then he chuckled. "You may not believe it, but I did get religion once. It didn't take, though."

He came to a dead stop, his eyes full of reminiscence. I offered him a square of sulphur matches, whereupon he quite mechanically rolled himself a Durham cigarette. After the first puff, he went on.

"It was 'way up in the Stanislaus country at the time everybody was looking for gold. I was a young feller then, and hadn't learned much sense. My mother was alive then, and my two sisters, and they put in most of their time worryin' about how my soul was comin' out. That didn't even get to me; but one day along come a girl——"

He paused and his eye grew vacant.

"I've plumb forgot her name!" he exclaimed, regretfully, after a moment. "Anyway, she was number one on my list. Nothing doing. She was religious from soda to hock, and she didn't look with no favour on my efforts toward polishin' up the flames of hell.

"Then one of these yere shoutin' evangelists came to camp. They don't have many of 'em these days—crazy, long-legged cusses, with long black clothes, plug hats, and language enough to stock a hundred sheep camps and a water-tank. My girl went in strong on the revival he started. First thing I knew about it was a rise in the temperature, and sweet smiles, and other encouragin' signs. For a minute I thought I was makin' headway. Then she sprung revival on me, and I see at once it was just to get me to go.

"I went. The show didn't hit me very strong until along toward the middle. Then a bright idea come to me. All at once up I got, sailed down the aisle, and flopped into the bench with the rest of the saved."

The Ranger turned on me a humorously mischievous eye.

"Well, I tell you there was a sensation! Worst sinner in the state saved! I wrastled and had the proper allowance of duck fits, same as I'd seen the others do. Then I come through. Hallelujah! You bet you! The tinkling cymbals sounded all right!

"Well, I walked home with Anna Maria, or whatever her name was, and I give her the holy kiss of brotherhood. But when I sifted into the house I run against such joy over the brand plucked from the burnin' that I got a hard jolt. My mother and two sisters were so plumb tickled pink, that all at once it come to me what I'd overlooked before. I'd got converted: and now it was up to me to make good!

"I climbed to my room as soon as I could get away.

"'Look here,' says I to me, 'you're elected. What are you goin' to do about it? Are you goin' to break three trustin' lovin' hearts? Or are you goin' to quit hosses, drink, poker, and everythin' that enables a man to wobble through this monotonous existence?'

"You see, Anna Maria didn't figure. I reckon the holy kiss of brotherhood didn't come up to anticipations.

"It was a hard situation. I didn't precisely see me with a long-term halo; but still I wasn't brute enough to kill all the family rejoicin' with a club. Finally I got out a pencil and paper and did some close figurin'. In fact I figured all night. I made out a schedule for what you might call a gradual backslide. In a week I was to let out a little inadvertent cuss. In two weeks I was due to play a quiet game of penny ante. And so on. I sort of broke the news to them gentle. In six months I was due for a real hell ripper. You bet it was a good one."

He squinted sideways at the sugar-pines.

"It's sometimes kind of hard to live up to these fellows, too," he exclaimed irrelevantly. "Speakin' of that, isn't it funny how a young fellow has trouble with just livin'? He's got to take the whole thing apart, and see how it goes. When he gets a little age into him, he just takes things as they come; but when he's young he's got to know all the whys. Now, as you can see, I never was much on religion, but a man's got to have something or other to go by or he gets as shiftless as a Digger."

"A code of ethics," I suggested.

"That's it. After you git it you just use it and forget it, same as fingers. Never notice that you do have fingers, but if you'll take the trouble to notice, you'll see that a baby is plumb curious about them. But while you're getting it, you have lots of troubles, and make heaps of experiments, and are dead serious—and ridiculous. I got up a wonder of a code of ethics once."

"What was it?" I encouraged him.

"A man hates to tell how much of a fool he was once, even when he's all over it," grinned California John. "For a general star-spangled idiocy that nobody had ever thought of before, I sure took all medals, cash prizes, and silver casters."

"Well, only the sheep follow a flock," I said.

"Them — and sheepmen and buzzards," added California John, with the grim distaste of the cattleman or ranger for wool. "Well, back in the fifties I made me up an account between me and the Lord. Whenever I did anything I ought not to, I charged myself up with a good stiff fine, and costs, anywhere from two bits to five dollars dependin' on how deep I'd got in. Gamblin' was two bits a chip; drinks *dos* *reales* per, and so on. It wasn't only what you'd call police-court cases, either. I rung in fightin', and meanness, and lyin', and all sorts of general cussedness. It was surprisin' what it came to by the end of the year. I wish I remembered exactly, but it was surprisin'."

"What did you do with the money?" I asked him.

"That's the point. I used to figure out on the other side where the Lord hadn't treated me square. I figured out He ought to send the rain, and dry calvin' weather, and should hold His hand in regard to fire and flood. I charged Him with them things—the actual damages, you *sabe*." California John threw back his head and laughed with whole-hearted enjoyment. "In a year I had the Lord so far behind the game that I could have drunk myself to death at two bits fine a drink and then been certain sure of salvation by some few round dollars. So I give it up, and come to the conclusion that a man was supposed to be decent in spite of tribulation."

"What did you find the best practical scheme finally?" I asked as he rose to go.

"Oh, just live along," replied California John.

XX

THE SURVEYORS

ONE morning in the early fall I rode out along the ridges, over ravines, across meadows, until I cut the old shake road to our north. There I dismounted. The day was crisp and cool, so I selected a spot full in the sun and sat down to wait. After a very long time, a toiling, creaking vehicle crawled into view. From it descended four men. After depositing bed-rolls, baggage, and instruments, the vehicle departed.

The first of the strangers was a man just past middle age, handsome in an aquiline, long-moustached fashion, a trifle inclined to an office shortness of wind at first, expressing himself with a Western heartiness of manner, humorous, absolutely good-natured, and—as it proved—game as a badger. He carried a bulky wooden case which, when opened, proved to contain a transit. This he fitted to its tripod and slanted over his shoulder, nor thereafter did he ever relinquish it.

His chief assistant was a man of twenty-five or thirty, alert in manner, very talkative, moving quickly and nervously, full of suggestion, and so anxious to do things right that he generally had them figured out all wrong before his instructions were half pronounced. A running fire of comment on whatever happened to be doing further insulated him from outside admonition. He wore a little stiff-brimmed hat at an angle; and from his general manner I imagine in his proper haunts he is either a scrapper or a bluffer—probably the former. With it all there was no real harm in him, and he always meant so well and was so anxious to please that one could not remain vexed. He was as irrepressible as a puppy dog. Inside of ten minutes he was calling me "my boy." Frozen out of that, he went back to

"Mr. White," slipped on to "White," graduated to "Whitey," and ended at "my boy" again; exactly like the puppy dog discouraged violently from licking one's face. In the course of the days that followed, I could almost tell the time of the clock by the manner of his address. "My boy" was due about eleven o'clock, and again about four. At those hours I nearly always had to bestow a little attention on Tom in order to set his vocatives aright.

The third member of the party was an Indian named Jack. He was a good Indian. His handling of an axe was excellent, and he could take a line and lay it out with his eye almost as accurately as another could have done so with a pocket compass. It is a comparatively simple matter to go to a point due north of your transit man when the ground is open or on a single slope. But when the sight through the transit is to leap a cañon full of trees and brush, and is to dodge far up the opposite slope through the big rocks, it requires considerable judgment to thread your way over and through and around all these obstacles and then finally to plant yourself in the line of sight. Furthermore Jack was intelligent. He learned quickly. The reversal of the rod for long-target readings he fathomed by observation before Tom had learned how by instruction. He caught on where and when to blaze trees along the line. And he was always ready to work.

Not so, Charley, the other Indian. Charley was the best-natured animal I ever encountered; and he was exceedingly comical to look upon. Otherwise he was not valuable. He had a face round and shiny as a copper harvest moon, with a few spiky little hairs by way of moustache indicating an approximate centre. His blue jean trousers hung around his hips, and above them sagged the most wonderful and wobbly corporation ever partly concealed beneath a cotton shirt. Charley's sole job was as a mark to backsight on. All he had to do was to stand bolt upright, holding a peeled wand perpendicular to a stake, while the Surveyor verified his instrument's direction by squinting back along the line he had already made. Somebody had to perform this simple task; and it might as well be Charley. After the Surveyor had waved both arms to signify "all right," Charley would wallow and heave and pant until he had caught up with the transit. Then he would sink on a log, wipe his brow, and grin with so amiable a triumph that we could not help laughing.

Nevertheless, there were times when the Indian in Charley flashed forth a hint of its quality. Once our line ran us two or three thousand feet down the mountain-side over a fearfully rough and steep country. When we had tied to our corner down there, we had to climb back. It was a grind, for the brush was thick, the slope very steep, and the high altitude caught at our wind. In the intervals of rest we had a good deal of fun over Charley's predicament. Pretty soon that aborigine dropped behind.

"Charley goin' die," remarked Jack cheerfully.

We toiled on. After a long time we came in sight of the top of the ridge. On the summit stood Charley, who greeted us with a loud and joyous whoop. It is only fair to state that we were at the time headed toward lunch.

Charley was always able to accomplish marvellous feats when it came to a question of quitting time or of grub. The Supervisor tells a story of having once seen Charley run down a brush rabbit! It happened generally that we finished our day's work at one of the old survey corners. That made a good starting-point for the next morning. Charley's thick head gradually evolved the idea that, in this game, corner meant quit. One morning we finished a half-mile line about ten o'clock, and at once set about looking for the old witness trees of the "established" corner. These, as I shall later explain, are often exceedingly difficult to find. Charley was very active in the search—and successful! He led us to those old witness trees with pride, and capered with delight, and grinned expansively, and generally acted as tickled as a dog that has caught a rat. We made our computations, and arose to continue.

"What!" cried Charley aghast; "we no quit 'um here? He *corner!*"

Poor old Charley could not understand, and for the rest of the day he entertained dark suspicions of us. We were not playing fair. Here he had won the game by finding a corner, and we declined to quit.

Charley was certainly a marvellous eater. We lunched one day at the lumber camp. It was a good meal, and varied. Charley ate one thing at a time. He would heap his plate full of meat, and eat that. Then he piled it with sweet potatoes, and devoured them. In turn he got away with a plateful each of meat, potatoes, corn, bread and gravy, tomatoes. Then he passed on to desserts—three kinds of pie, doughnuts, bread pudding, preserved apricots, stewed plums. He finished with a chunk of very sweet chocolate cake, and pushed back his chair with a sigh. Then his twinkling little eyes fell on a dish, hitherto concealed from him, at the other end of the table. It contained a mess of red beans swimming in watery grease, and several chunks of salt side-pork.

"Pass 'um beans!" said Charley firmly.

Our task was to run a certain portion of the line around the company's timber holdings. To do so we had first of all to find a section corner from which to start. This was an affair of some difficulty.

Probably most of you know what a corner is. For the benefit of others I will describe briefly.

The original Government surveys are official for the country they covered and for the details they established. Nothing they did can be changed or altered. The field notes are on record at the land offices, and the later surveyor must follow them. Thus the earlier surveys had to do merely with the outside boundaries of the townships, and the corners of the outside tier of sections were marked and described. Later the section lines inside that township were run. Then all the section corners were established, but always with reference to the township lines. If the second surveyor, running a true line west from a section corner through the middle of the township, should happen to come out at the corresponding corner on the other side, well and good. He was lucky. But if he cut the township line north or south of that corner, he must modify his line and all his corners. In this fashion an initial mistake means a whole county cut bias, but that is not permitted to matter. Less confusion results from a cat-a-corner section than from a multiplicity of corners.

The establishment of section boundaries is as far as the Government goes. When, as in the present case, the private owner wants to run through various sections, following his boundaries, he engages a county surveyor who establishes his interior one-quarter or one-eighth corners, but always with due respect to the results attained by the men who have preceded him.

Let us now return to the original surveyor.

He ran through our mountains back in the early seventies. From his starting corner he ran a "true line" north, say. At the end of a half-mile he stopped to establish his first quarter-section corner. This nine times out of ten consisted of something like a "post 3 feet long, 4 inches square, marked $\frac{1}{4}$ Cor. Sec. VI, set in mound of rocks 3 ft. across base, from which bears N. by 5° W. sugar-pine 42 inches dia. marked on S. side $\frac{1}{4}$ Cor. B. T., and S. 18° E. fir 12 in. dia. marked on N. side $\frac{1}{4}$ Cor. B. T." So read the field notes. This means generally that the surveyor in question had his men stick up the post, lay around it half a dozen stones —rarely more—and blaze two "witness trees" marked as above. He is supposed, moreover, to dig two pits north and south of the corner as additional landmarks. Invariably he writes down "pits impracticable," which relieves him of much labour. A section corner is the same except that the post is larger, and there are four witness trees—at each point of the compass—instead of two.

Note these facts: that "the mound of rocks" peters down to as few as will surround the post; that in my experience the pits are invariably "impracticable"; that the witness or bearing trees (hence the "B. T.") are blazed low where a man can swing an axe most comfortably.

Time passes. The manzañita, chinquapin, and snowbrush perhaps spread their mantle abroad. Snow, rain, wind, frost exercise turn-about their disintegrating influences. Sheep and cattle pass, thrusting the beautiful, peeled new post from the perpendicular. The next heavy snow flattens it to earth. The "mound of rocks" sinks into the leaf mould, covers itself with moss, drapes itself in brush. The fresh blazes on the witness trees first glaze themselves over with a transparent film of pitch; then slowly year by year the bark draws its edges together across the wound until at last the gap is closed. Underneath, the white tree wood adds its annual rings, until at the last all that is to be discovered of that original broad, fresh carved surface is a narrow perpendicular wrinkle, surrounded by bark the least bit lighter in tone than the rest. In all probability the growth of the forest has furthermore risen to screen it. And that is the "corner" you *must* find before your work can be accepted.

It is fun, this game. You have in hand your hasty field notes, jotted down in the absorption of the day's work nearly forty years ago. It babbles of brooks "3 links wide, course S. W.," and of trees "thirty inches dia." The brooks have long since dried into stringer meadows, perhaps; and the trees probably look back with scorn on their youthful slenderness of the thirty inches. The party is scattered in all directions through the fragrant forest, spying microscopically for the faintest indication that man has preceded it into this apparently virgin fastness. To the novice the whole affair of that long-past labour seems so futile! All summer these men worked, and made their records for all time; and in the short space of two generations the forest has calmly obliterated them. What would another generation of it mean? We must be just in time to secure these old records from total extinction, thinks the novice.

And finally, one or the other of the party utters a whoop. We all gather to his call. In triumph he points to the wrinkle of the old blaze. "Sugar-pine 42 in. diameter," reads the Surveyor. "She's grown since. Now rustle out your fir." That is a short matter.

And then comes the wonder of it all. Jack sets to work chopping carefully above and below the old scar. Inch after inch he cuts into the tree, the white chips flying. With a final wrench, a long slab falls away. There is the weather-beaten old blaze, coated with the transparent varnish of the dried pitch, its carving as distinct and clear-cut as the day it was made. And on the slab of solid wood Jack has cut out are those carved letters reversed and in relief, like printers' type. I have seen such slabs as much as eight inches thick. The tree has taken up its growth as though nothing had happened, but first it spread its thin varnish between the new wood and the old in order that for all time the Record might be preserved. As long as the forest shall endure, so long will that record stand, so long will the first man's successes and mistakes, his care and his carelessness, the slip of his scribing tool be cherished on the tablets of the Witness. The next generation would only have to chop a little deeper; that is all.

In the meantime the rest of us have been prowling around the brush while the Surveyor sets his transit to determine the exact location of the corner by the directions from the witness trees. In the middle of a bunch of chinquapins we stumble over three or four scattered stones. It seems incredible that these should represent the "mound of rocks," yet in a moment Jack holds up a little fragment of dried, cracked and decaying wood. It is exactly like the thousands of limb fragments scattered everywhere, except that, among almost precisely similar scorings, we make out two straight lines at an angle to each other. Worms do not score in straight lines. Therefore we know that we are looking upon the marks of the old surveyor's scribe; that they are some part of that "$\frac{1}{4}$ Cor. Sec. VI"; and that this fragment lying in the hollow of Jack's hand represents the "post 3 feet long and 4 inches square."

It is exceedingly interesting thus to follow up a man after a lapse of forty years. Doing the same work that he did, and in the same way, it is as easy to read his day as though he had passed only the month before. He made his petty mistakes, and was unaware of them, or forgot them; the forest remembered. We can tell when he was getting tired; where he guessed; where he shrugged away little responsibilities and accuracies. It was always very evident where one man's survey left off and another's began. The individuality of the work was apparent.

"Ran east on true line between Sections

24 and 25," went the notes, "79 chains 65 links. Established ¼ corner at 40 chains." Alas for veracity! So it was reported, so paid. The maps were filed and accumulated dust. Perhaps the surveyor has grown grey, and celebrated, and bigger than the old, wild job through the wilderness: who knows? But now after forty years the forest silently bears witness against him. Old surveyor, you did not run 79 chains 65 links east. You ran 40 chains and established your quarter-corner, and went on 800 feet. Then it was between three and four of an October afternoon; you looked down the deep hole into which the line dropped. It was too late, you were too tired, to tackle that five hundred yards or so. You did not want to come away back there next day just for that short distance; so you sat you down, probably on top this very rock, and *computed* how far it must be to the township line!

How do we know? Because the corner is actually 40 chains from the west; we found it so. But it is not within five hundred feet of 79 chains and 65 links from the township line. This happened to be a "short section," and you would have placed the quarter stake two hundred and fifty feet farther west, had you measured the whole distance. As for the rest, we know where you must have started; you would have arrived at the bluff by the middle of the afternoon; this rock is the handiest on which to sit; and your field notes show that the scene of your next work lay, not near here, *but across the township.* Besides, we felt pretty tired ourselves when we looked down into that hole.

We were up and out very early. The crew stayed at the lumber camp, while I, of course, lived at the Cabin. Thus we had to converge at the point where we had left our work the night before. At sundown, or a little before, we would quit. Then it became necessary to cut across country to our respective habitations.

In this a curious distinction made itself evident:—that between riding through a country with the sole object of getting somewhere, and surveying a mathematically straight line.

In one case you pay slight attention to details and much to generalities. You care little for the lesser landmarks, such as burned stubs, curious rocks, and the like. No matter how unusual they may be, your recollection of them is likely to be duplicated a dozen times a day. If you depend on them, you are speedily lost. But the direction of main ridges and the general trend of their laterals, the course of streams, the situation of "pockets," the slopes of the country, "the lay of the land," in short, are of the utmost importance. All day you are busily engaged in constructing a mental-relief map on which you can look down and to which you can refer new features as you come across them.

In a country of broad outlooks this is not difficult. The nearest peak will furnish you a vantage-ground from which to understand the framework for a week's journeying. Then you are equipped to plunge down into the cañons and forests. Even if everything goes wrong, and you get all tangled up, you can, by a little earnest visualising, fit the discrepancies into the plan of what you have actually seen.

But in a densely forested mountain country the task has an added difficulty in that you will be forced to substitute, for this first bird's-eye view, a synthesis of your own. You must bring to your assistance all your experience. From the single bone you must, like Cuvier, construct the whole animal. Such a combination of ridge and water-source must in this sort of country mean such a general scheme of things. Then you keep your eyes open for corroboration. If that corroboration fails, or if your hypothesis is flatly denied by the next hard physical fact, you must figure out a new one on the basis of what you know about all three. The test comes when, trusting in the mental-relief map you have constructed out of fragmentary operations, you strike across country you have never seen, to reach some spot you have never visited.

Nothing affords one greater satisfaction than to find one's reasoning has been correct. Nothing is more confusing than to fail. Nevertheless, practice and experience give most men a considerable facility. Of course they do not analyse matters as I have done, but the elements of the case are always the same. Such men are said to have a good sense of direction. They have—*plus* a heap of experience.

While I am on the subject, let me add one word: no man lives who cannot be lost somewhere and sometime. The surer he is that he will never get lost anywhere at any time, the surer I would be in regard to the truth of my statement as respects that particular man. Of course a woodsman would never stay lost; but the time surely comes when the country is strange and the ways out absolutely do not exist. A few moments' abstraction or inattention at a critical point will do it, especially if the inattention is complete—that is, if the subconscious mind, too, is absent from its post. When a man tells me he has never been lost, I conclude one of two things: either he has not had really extended experience, or he is not entirely frank, either with himself or with me.

When following a transit, however, the opposite state of affairs obtains. Here you are tied to your instrument. However the country lies, you go due north—or south, or east, or west, as the case may be. Generalities are of no interest except as their features cross the narrow straight line of your progress—except as they interpose cañons, ravines, streams, brush, or hills to your onward march. Your task is to open a straight "sight" for the surveyor. You are very much interested in small details; in fact, a single feathery twig may blot the crossbars of the glass. It is a game of almost complete absorption. When night falls you look about you on a strange country. Between this and your last observation for your mental-relief map, a day's work has intervened. You straighten your back and look about you.

"Well, which way home?" is the invariable question, and it is well to guess right, for darkness is near at hand.

It is a game, like the hunt for old corners, and its winning brings a mild victor's satisfaction, as well as a warm and early supper.

The day's work itself was full of variety. On arriving at our last station of the day before, we at once prepared for the next "sight." Tom, with his brilliantly checkered rod, went ahead. Jack and I cut out anything that interfered with the clear sight through the little transit telescope. Sometimes we had luck. Tom could retire six or seven hundred feet down a long fresh aisle or across a cañon. Again the big trees and rocks, or the brows of hills, or a tangle too large to cut out would bring the rodman to within a few feet of the instrument. Jack and I swung our axes for an hour at a time.

Again we had nothing to do but saunter along the high, open, rocky ridges, occasionally blazing a tree to indicate the course of the boundary. Always the Surveyor clung stoutly to his transit.

The Surveyor, as I intimated some space back, was game as a badger. He came into this rather high altitude directly from the plains, and he was not in the best of shape for mountain travel. Nevertheless, he stuck to it, and climbed all the steeps, and worked through without complaint until nightfall, carrying over his shoulder that piece of field ordnance of his, and a little hand-satchel containing his notes and computation tables. Among other things he brought with him a mule fully sixteen hands high, on which he used occasionally to ride to and from camp, when camp was very distant. The first time he mounted this tremendous animal, it bucked with him. The handle of the hand-satchel broke, and papers flew like flakes in a snowstorm. The Surveyor stayed with it, and only dismounted when one of us seized the animal's head. We loosened the back cinch, as a possible cause of war, and quite as a matter of fact the Surveyor started to remount.

"I don't know as he'll let me ride him," was his only remark.

The Surveyor was to me a marvel of patience as respects Tom. Tom was eager to do the right thing, but rattle-brained. He listened to the first three words of direction, instantly supplied his own conclusion—generally a wrong one—and acted on it. Then it took a strong counter-suggestion to head him right. That counter-suggestion I should have proffered with a club. From our position in advance, the usual interchange was about like this:

Surveyor (shouting): "Try to get as far back against that tree as you can. No, *this* side the tree. Not so far! No, a little at a time. No, not that side, this side."

Tom (excitedly): "Well, I can't tell what you do want. Why in hell don't you tell me just where you do want me?"

Surveyor (sweetly and patiently): "That's just what I'm trying to do, Tom. Try again."

The man was always wrong; and he repeated stupid mistakes. I wondered how the Surveyor could possibly present to him always that front of calm and patient placidity. One day I happened to be back with the instrument. Then I discovered that the conversation went more like this, the italicised portions being uttered in a low voice.

Surveyor: "Try to get as far back against that tree as you can, *you mutton-headed mud-turtle.* No, this side—*lucky there's only two sides or you'd get it wrong oftener, you thick-witted idiot.* Not so far. *Of course you'd do it wrong.* No, a little at a time. *I wonder how many times I've told you that. I ought to get a phonograph and make you carry it.* No, not that side, this side, *as I before remarked eight thousand separate, distinct, and several times.*"

Which seemed to me an admirable system. It relieved the Surveyor's mind without inducing a row. Tom was incurable; and the Surveyor, with a large wisdom, had early realised that fact.

Our line soon developed that obstinate, resistant, almost inimical personality so often met in natural forces. It invariably crossed the highest, steepest hills and the deepest, most precipitous cañons, when easy "sags" and passes were just off its course. All day it would cling to the open rocky ridges while the sun shone clear and warm. Then it would rain over night. Next day we would find ourselves neck-deep in acre after acre of shower-wet brush. In three steps we would be soaked through, and would so remain. By noon the sun would have dried the bushes; whereupon ironically we would emerge once more into the open country.

But always we made our day's distance, and when night approached, though tired, had left our records in the keeping of the forest for all time. Back tramped the friend who was then visiting us at the Cabin and I, to where we had last left our horses. As the sun dipped lower, we rode down through the silent forest.

At this time of day the sunlight falls in a yellow gold on the distant ridges glimpsed through the trees, a yellower, weirder, deeper gold than I have ever seen elsewhere. The shadows rise cool from the darkening ravines. Twilight comes swiftly in these latitudes, and as swiftly gives place to night. By the time we had reached the summit of the ridge above the Cabin, Billy had already lit the lamp. We yelled an announcement of our coming; the dogs cut across lots through the brush; Flapjack, leaving his customary position in the rear, tinkled ahead and merrily leaped the fence to the meadow.

XXI

THE JOURNEY

It takes as long to go to the Cabin as it would to go to Chicago. The first three days are very hot. On a cool fresh noon the thermometer stands from 90 to 95 degrees; on warm days from 100 to 105 degrees; and on hot days from that on until the mercury explodes the bulb. This is fine for dried fruits, of which the production is enormous; for umbrella trees, with the black shade; and for horned toads, of which, however, the visible supply is gradually decreasing. It is not so desirable for him who rides; and still less pleasant for him whose unfortunate lines follow (over dusty roads) the slow progress of the stage. The heat beats from the hills and cuts as from an opened furnace door; the dust, wafted by a gentle following current of air, envelops the vehicle in a cloud; the countryside is parched and brown, awaiting the annual rains; and the ground squirrels and burrowing owls and coyotes and brush birds merely irritate by a useless and senseless activity. Moreover, the stage leaves the railroad at six in the morning, and drags uphill until five of the afternoon; which is a long time.

The first two hours are not so bad. Even in the hot country the early morning keeps a certain freshness of the night. The horses are lively, the country flat. Generally we let the dogs run, and they range wide, chasing madly after ground squirrels. But by the time we reach the foothills the peculiar burning-glass quality of the sun is beginning to strike in. The horses fall to a walk. The dogs drop in behind, exhibiting inches of pink dripping tongues. Seat cushions get hard. Then we round a corner and stop opposite a broad field between two hills. In the distance is a barn from which emerges an old man leading fresh horses. When he has delivered these animals to the driver, he brings to us the basket he is carrying, from which — and from the great kindness of his heart—he distributes fresh figs or peaches and apricots according to the month. This old man has a long white beard, and a ruddy skin, and a cheerful blue eye, and is the first of our landmarks.

For, as we go on, we lose our sense of proportion as respects time. No one can tell, after the heat has begun, whether it is ten o'clock or two. Generally it feels as if it should be six o'clock of day after to-morrow. The only means of estimating progress is by the landmarks. After we had been over the stage ride once or twice these become unforgettably impressed. They are absurdly simple. There were, for instance, the Surly Family, who never answered our greetings; the House with the Twisted Tree as a verandah post; the Dog who comes after the Mail; the Two-

Storied Adobe; the Wabbly Bridge; the old Gold Workings; the Leaning Chimney, of stone; the First Pine; and as many more as you please. Until we had been over the road five or six times, these landmarks held to us no sequence. We could not have told you which came first or second or fourth or last. They were so many isolated, distinct pictures. Merely we were certain that somewhere in the course of the long hot day they existed. Sometimes, toward the close of the journey, hoping to persuade ourselves we were almost arrived, we tried to think we had been mistaken. Certainly we had not passed the Two Old Men's Cabin, with the fig trees and the flowing well; but we must have been mistaken. We had seen them somewhere else. The journey's end must be over that ridge, and between here and there was obviously no more room for landmarks. So we tried to argue the non-existence of the Two Old Men; but inexorably at last they would shoulder their way into the weary hours of our day. The journey's end was not over that ridge; our landmarks declined to be wished away.

But though we grew wearier as the day advanced, compensations came with the hours. We were climbing slowly but surely, and the oak trees, the buckthorn, the chaparral were constantly thickening and growing taller. Rocks covered with lichens, red as paint, outcropped. Ravines and deep gashes cleft the hills. Running water flowed in what lower down would have been dry barrancas. From one point we had seen the bold rocky serrated line of Shuteye, the snow still clinging to its crest. And as we drew slowly but surely nearer, the azure of our Ridge deepened to violet, then to slate; and at last, with the sunset light, to the deep, beautiful rose-pink and amethyst of evening.

And then we strike a little down-grade. The horses trot ahead. We cross two bridges, and pull up opposite the shaded broad-roofed house. Aunt Belle comes out to greet us. We descend stiffly, and shake ourselves, and wonder if we will ever be able to get all the dust off. For we are coated with it, our faces are ash-grey with it, at every move we smoke with it.

Next morning we saddle up, pack Flapjack, and set ourselves to the last steep climb.

At first the chaparral, the manzañita, the digger pines follow us. But as we mount the steep side, slowly the vegetation changes. Yellow pines, increasingly dense, replace the scattered diggers. Here and there a dogwood's fresh green and the broad cream petals of its blossoms shine in bright contrast. The light olive of snowbrush, the vivid green of bear clover, the polished leaves of chinquapin, perhaps even a tiny patch of azaleas offer a great refreshment to the eye. There is no more brown and powdery grass. The air, while still warm, bears on its tiny wandering breezes just a taste of crispness. Still, the plains and foothills lie below us, and the breath of them follows us scorching; the trees on the slope are of ordinary size—we are even yet in California.

But after three hours or so we make a last scramble over the rim.

Around us are the Trees, our great, beautiful Trees. The grass is green, the water sparkling, the birds shouting aloud with joy, the sky blue. Flowers are all about us, even to the edges of the melting snow-banks. California has been whisked away. We are back again in our magic country, and other places are not. It is as sudden as that; the mere topping of a hill.

We ride along the old road, spying eagerly for the little changes. Winter, the gardener of these mighty domains, has been at work, pruning the limbs with his shears whose twin blades are the Wind and the Snow. The fragments lie everywhere, but the tall, noble trees tower stronger and straighter for the shearing. Only here and there one of the brittle firs has lost a top or fallen full length to the ground. We spy out the strange, brilliant flames of the snow-plant; we listen for the hermit thrush; we note the job of axe work old Winter has left us to do before wheels can traverse our road. Over the sky-line, down through the long aisle of the road, we espy Theophilus. We greet him with a shout.

Ten minutes later, having shovelled the snow off the verandah, we are gazing into the darkened interior.

"Goodness! What a mess!" cries Billy.

She hunts her stubby little broom; I get out the axe. Before getting to work we step together to the edge of the verandah and look down the vista of the meadow to the new-young Spring. The peaceful accustomedness of it all descends softly on our spirits like a mist. We have never been away. Everything is as it was. The old life of the great spaces takes us familiarly by the hand. We do our daily accustomed tasks and pleasures, and at night fall asleep in the open. And then——

Suddenly we awaken late at night. It is pitch dark, and the wind is high. A heavy, swift rain is beating down on us fiercely. To our sleep numbed faculties it seems better to bear with those ills we have than to rush into unknown evils of wet brush on the way to the shelter of the Cabin. Therefore we pull our canvas quite over our heads and snuggle down in the blankets. Occasionally in a half-sleep we shrink from a wet space. The pelt of the rain lulls us. When we finally awaken after daylight, we find the outside of the canvas almost a solid sheet of ice.

That day we notice several things; the meadow is eaten down; the horses, restless for the low country, huddle in the upper fence corner; the birds have all departed or fallen silent; the pine needles have for some weeks been sifting down as the great trees thinned their tops in preparation for snow.

By these signs we know that the hour has struck.

Therefore we pile everything in the middle of the floor, shutter the windows, board up the fireplace, wire the gates; bid Theophilus farewell, and ride away. Even before we have surmounted the little swell of our hill, the squirrels are swarming the shed kitchen; an impudent finch pulls away a chunk of mud from our chimney. Every year there is so much to do over again—clearing up that which the forest has sprinkled down over our belongings; cutting out the dead trees; bracing and repairing; mending fences; pruning encroaching and persistent growth. The thought will not be stifled that perhaps we shall not be able to come one year—and another, and another. And then, perhaps, our friend the Forest will conclude that we are not coming back any more, and quite gently will begin to take the tiny clearing to herself. She can do this very swiftly, adapting and changing what she cannot absorb. Billy thinks old Theophilus, Theophilus the cynical and wise, will stand guard for us always. I respect, but do not understand, Theophilus. He is quite capable of deciding cynically to ally himself with the wild forces. He is indifferent. And whether the undoubted Spirit of Wisdom with which he is animated could hold its own against the Spirit of the Woods, I am not sure. Near the back gate Billy has a grove of pines two inches tall which she is cherishing for remote generations. My private opinion is that before these tiny seedlings will have grown tall enough to cast a shadow over the Cabin, the sentinel pines, swaying gently just beneath the sky, will signal their brothers of the Merced to the North, their sisters of the Kaweah to the South that at last these little human activities are indeed one "with Nineveh and Tyre."

NOTE

In all the extent of the old White-Pine belt of the Eastern and Northern States the next generation will be able to look upon no sample of the forest that was. The stumps, even, are rotting away. The yellow pine timber of the South will have vanished and left no sign. Your children's children will have to believe as much as they are able of the descriptions to be found in the books they will exhume from the libraries. This conclusion is not the sentimental imagining of a pessimist. The remaining pine forests, such as they are, are in the hands of private owners, and will sooner or later find their way to the lumber piles. Replanting on an extensive scale is ultimately inevitable; but replanting will produce a crop of trees in rows, not a forest.

This, I think, most of us have come to understand. What we do not realise is that those of us who have seen the great woodlands of California should rejoice, for there too the big fellows are doomed to vanish.

How about our immense National Forests? How about Conservation?

It is true we have set aside for the public vast tracts of woodland, but the National Forests are for use and not for integral preservation. They are intended to be lumbered off, just as private holdings are meant to be lumbered. The only difference is that the Forest Service aims to cut the ripe trees in such a manner as to leave the woodland in a condition to produce a future supply. In the perfected use of our resources, when private holdings have been cut over, and we turn for our lumber to Government reserves, all the full-grown mature trees will be harvested. The forest itself will be preserved, both as a watershed and as a growing and perpetual supply, but it must necessarily change its character. The big trees will all be gone; *and never more will they be seen again.*

A moment's figuring will show why this must be. Suppose an acre of forest land will produce 40,000 board feet. In a virgin forest this amount will be comprised in say three or four huge trees four hundred years old. The trees are cut down: a new growth springs up. At the end of eighty years there may be twenty trees cutting 2000 feet apiece. At one hundred years five of the twenty will have died from overcrowding, but the fifteen remaining will have made sufficient growth to maintain the total at about 40,000 feet. From this time on the rate of increase is just about balanced by the rate of thinning. Purely as a commercial proposition it is better sense to cut the twenty smaller trees at eighty years than to wait for the three or four big ones; to harvest five crops in the length of time necessary to grow one of the old-fashioned sort. In the conserved National Forests no more than in the wasted and slashed private holdings can the future hope to look upon the great sugar pines and firs in the glory of their primeval majesty.

The only hope of that is in setting aside national parks for their preservation, as we have set aside national parks for the preservation of other things, such as geysers, battlefields, cañons, sequoias, and grass. In some of these numerous reservations, particularly in those dedicated to the so-called Big Trees, necessarily grow many specimens of the various pines and firs. But they are only specimens. To preserve intact the dignity and majesty peculiar to these forests it would be necessary to set aside especial Sugar Pine Parks from districts where such species particularly flourish; and this has nowhere been done. If somewhere along the Sugar-Pine belt[1] some wisdom of legislation or executive decree could duplicate the Muir Woods on a greater scale, or the Sequoia National Park on a lesser, we would avoid the æsthetic mistake we made in tossing to memory alone the visions of our old primeval forests of the East. We had sense enough to set aside a portion of our sequoias, but that apparently was only because of their scarcity. Probably sugar pines are now actually too abundant to be bothered with. We are rapidly remedying that difficulty.

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[1] The very best specimen of Sugar Pine Forest in Government control is situated on the south end of Whiskey Ridge in Madera County. Plans are now forward to cut this timber under Government supervision.

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